Tadabbur i Qur'ān Vol.5

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Vol. 5

Exegesis of

Sūrah Ṭāhā (20) – Surah al-Qaṣaṣ (29)

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Sūrah Ṭāhā

Theme

In this *sūrah*, the Prophet (sws) is urged to show patience on the attitude of his adversaries and to wait for God's decision: if they do not listen to him, he should not worry for soon they will meet their fate. With this topic, the *sūrah* begins and with it, it ends as well. He has been directed to diligently pray and supplicate before God to attain this patience and in order to adhere to it. At the same time, the ills of impatience are explained. The whole of the *sūrah* addresses the Prophet (sws). If his adversaries are spoken to, it is in an indirect way without directly addressing them.

In the previous *sūrah*, many celebrated prophets of God are mentioned. In this one, however, only Moses (sws) is mentioned in detail. All important incidents of his life from his birth and migration are highlighted. The purpose is to provide guidance to the Prophet (sws) in his current phase of preaching and in the future ones also through a practical example.

Analysis

The *sūrah* can be divided into three portions with respect to its meanings:

Verses (1-8): In a very affectionate way, the Prophet (sws) is directed to not over-stretch and burden himself in his concern for others to accept faith. His responsibility is to only remind those who have some fear in them. It is not his duty to make those accept faith who are devoid of fear. This Qur'ān is not the petition or a request: it is the directive of the creator of the heavens and the earth and the whole universe, and the Prophet (sws) should present it in a manner worthy of it; he does not need to pamper these ingrates and arrogant people; he should trust His Lord Who knows all his hidden and open affairs.

Verses (9-98): The account of Moses (sws) is mentioned. Briefly put, following are its prominent aspects:

- Moses (sws) reaches the sacred valley of Ṭuwā after returning from Madyan and is blessed with prophethood.
- He receives his first directive after being made a prophet.
- God blesses him with the miracles of the staff and the white hand.
- He is given the directive of going to the Pharaoh to warn him. Mention of his supplication for inner satisfaction and for Aaron as a helper, and its immediate acceptance.
- To strengthen the heart of Moses (sws), it is stated how in his childhood he was

shown special favour by God: he was cast in the river; God not only saved him but made his enemy and His own enemy rear and nurture him and ultimately took him to his mother. It was she who, in utmost distress, had consigned him to the waves of the river fearing the Pharaoh.

– The incident of killing of a Copt at the hands of Moses (sws) is mentioned. Moses (sws) then sets off to Madyan. After passing through various trials and tribulations there, he reaches the sacred valley of Ṭuwā in accordance with the divine plan and is chosen as a prophet.
– After this act of God's favour is reminded of, Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) are encouraged that they should bravely go and warn the Pharaoh. God will protect them.
– Moses (sws) presents his message to the Pharaoh and the latter argues and debates with him.
– The contest between Moses (sws) and the magicians of the Pharaoh is mentioned. The latter are defeated and embrace faith.
– The Pharaoh accuses Moses (sws) and those who have professed faith in him of rebellion and threatens to kill them.
– Moses (sws) is directed to migrate from Egypt along with the Israelites and is pursued by the Pharaoh. Ultimately, Moses (sws) and the Israelites cross over the sea safely and the Pharaoh and his armies are drowned.
– The favours of God bestowed on the Israelites are recounted. In Moses' absence of a few days in which he had gone to receive the Torah, the Israelites are afflicted with the trial of Sāmirī. As a result, they take to idol worship. Details of this incident are mentioned including its causes and consequences.

Verses (99-135): After the account of Moses (sws) is presented, these concluding verses address the Prophet (sws). The *sūrah* ends on the topic with which it began: he is assured that this anecdote of the past is not merely a past happening. It is actually his own anecdote as well. People have been warned from all aspects in the book given to him. If they do not accept it, they will bear its consequences both in this world and in the next. There are many lessons which these people can learn from history. For this reason, the Prophet (sws) should not show impatience in their matter and should patiently wait for God's decision. Hastiness gives Satan a chance to play his pranks. It was because of hastiness that Adam (sws) was deceived by Satan. So the Prophet (sws) should patiently wait for God's decision and diligently adhere to the prayer to acquire this patience. The Prophet (sws) should also not be worried about the faith of the rich thinking that this would strengthen his ranks. His preaching has its own resources and God has taken upon Himself to fulfil his financial needs. He should tell those who are demanding to see the punishment that his duty was only to inform them. If they now await this punishment, they should keep waiting; the Prophet (sws) too is waiting.

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Section 1: Verses (1-8)

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

طٰہٰ ﴿۱﴾ مَاۤ اَنۡزَلۡنَا عَلَیۡکَ الۡقُرۡاٰنَ لِتَشۡقٰۤی ﴿۲﴾ اِلَّا تَذۡکِرَۃً لِّمَنۡ یَّخۡشٰی ﴿۳﴾ تَنۡزِیۡلًا مِّمَّنۡ خَلَقَ الۡاَرۡضَ وَ السَّمٰوٰتِ الۡعُلٰی ﴿۴﴾ اَلرَّحۡمٰنُ عَلَی الۡعَرۡشِ اسۡتَوٰی ﴿۵﴾ لَہٗ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ وَ مَا بَیۡنَہُمَا وَ مَا تَحۡتَ الثَّرٰی ﴿۶﴾ وَ اِنۡ تَجۡہَرۡ بِالۡقَوۡلِ فَاِنَّہٗ یَعۡلَمُ السِّرَّ وَ اَخۡفَی ﴿۷﴾ اَللّٰہُ لَاۤ اِلٰہَ اِلَّا ہُوَ ؕ لَہُ الۡاَسۡمَآءُ الۡحُسۡنٰی ﴿۸﴾

In the name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

This is Sūrah Ṭāhā. We have not revealed this Qur'ān to you to put you through difficulty. It is only a reminder for those who fear God. It has been revealed in a very thorough manner by the being Who created the earth and the lofty skies. The most Merciful Who sits on the throne of governance. Whatever is in the heavens and in the earth and whatever is in between and whatever is below the earth are under His control. (1-6)

Whether you speak openly or secretly; nothing is hidden from Him because He knows what is said secretly and what is even more hidden. He is God; there is no deity besides Him. All good names belong to Him. (7-8)

Explanation

طٰہٰ ﴿۱﴾[1]

These letters are from among the isolated letters. A detailed discussion on them can be seen under the first verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

مَاۤ اَنۡزَلۡنَا عَلَیۡکَ الۡقُرۡاٰنَ لِتَشۡقٰۤی ﴿۲﴾[2]

The Prophet (sws) has been very affectionately been made to understand here that the extent of responsibility of preaching the Qur'ān that he has taken upon himself and the burden he is bearing as a result is not required of him at all. His only responsibility

1. This is Sūrah Ṭāhā.
2. We have not revealed this Qur'ān to you to put you through difficulty.

is to communicate this Book to people. Those who have the ability to recognize the truth and a semblance of God's fear will accept it. It is not his responsibility to force it down those who are devoid of this ability. He should not make his life miserable by doing this.

It has been explained at several instances in this book that when after exerting himself day and night to call people to the Qur'ān, the Prophet (sws) saw that they still denied a very evident thing and in no way have a soft heart towards it, he would be worried that perhaps he was lacking in effort. When he would be overcome with this feeling, his preaching efforts would increase further and he would still feel dissatisfied after doing his utmost.

It is in background that the verse assures him. He should not go beyond the call of his duty as he is not responsible for others to accept faith.

إِلَّا تَذْكِرَةً لِّمَن يَخْشَىٰ ﴿٣﴾[3]

This verse explains the status of the Qur'ān, the extent of the Prophet's responsibility and also the type of people who would be influenced by it and those who would be deprived of it.

The word تَذْكِرَةً means "a reminder." Obviously, what is reminded of is always found within an addressee and that which he may have forgotten and cannot be something brought from outside. Deliberation on the Qur'ān shows that its purpose too is precisely the same. It is not something strange or unique and does not impose anything from outside on us. It actually reminds us of the facts already found in our nature that we may have become indifferent to. The argument which the Qur'ān employs to remind us are drawn from the world inside and outside us and which our intellect readily understands. However, either we do not use them or evade their obvious consequences. The history which the Qur'ān has presented to teach its addressees and make them learn a lesson is one which they are already aware of. The teachings of the prophets it refers to are the ones which these addressees claimed to be a progeny and followers of.

The verse states that only those people will benefit from this who fear (لِمَن يَخْشَىٰ). The grammatical object of the verb يَخْشَىٰ is suppressed. If parallel verses of the Qur'ān are kept in consideration, then the whole sentence would be to the effect: لِمَن يَخْشَىٰ رَبَّهُ بِالْغَيْبِ (it is a reminder for those fear their Lord in spite of not seeing Him).

In other words, this is the same as what is said in verse 2 of Sūrah al-Baqarah (هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ). I have explained it there that this piety and fear is found in every person whose nature has not been perverted. If such people become indifferent, they are awakened from their slumber by reminders of the Qur'ān. As for those who pervert their natures because of their misdeeds, no amount of shaking can awaken them. The

3. It is only a reminder for those who fear God.

only logic that they can understand is the logic of force which animals understand. They want to believe after seeing things through their naked eyes. However, before God, only that belief has weight which is acknowledged through intellect and not through observation.

If the Qur'ān is a reminder, then it follows that the task of the Prophet (sws) is reminding people and not forcing them to believe. His obligation is to only remind people of the lesson they have forgotten. Whether they actually are reminded or not is the responsibility of the people and not his.

In other words, the verse under discussion stresses the fact that if people are not benefitting from the Prophet's reminders, he should not worry. It is they who are responsible for this behaviour and not he.

تَنْزِيْلًا مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْاَرْضَ وَالسَّمٰوٰتِ الْعُلٰى ۝[4]

The word تَنْزِيْل means to reveal something in a thorough and gradual manner. The implication is that since this Qur'ān has been revealed to remind people, the Almighty did not content Himself to just giving it to people in one go so that what is meant to be presented to them is done so in some way or the other. On the contrary, He has revealed it in episodes in a very painstaking way so that they are not left with any excuse that were not able to understand it

The words "by the being Who created the earth and the lofty skies" point to the exalted nature of the Qur'ān by referring to the majesty of the Being Who revealed it. It is not something that can be dismissed because it has no basis. It is also not a request of a petitioner so that if it is accepted, it would be a favour to him and if it is not, then he would be deprived. In fact, it is the directive of the creator of the heavens and the earth that has to be followed. If people reject it, they should fully contemplate the consequences.

There is an indication in this for the Prophet (sws) that he should present this Book before people the way the words of the Creator and Master of the heavens and the earth should be presented. Neither should he console and reassure them nor force or pressurize them. If they accept it, they themselves are the beneficiaries and not God. It is not a meek request; it is in fact a scripture of guidance for people. Those who reject it, will face its grave consequence and not harm the Prophet (sws) in any way.

This topic is discussed in the Qur'ān at various instances. Thus, for example in Sūrah 'Abas, it is stated:

كَلَّآ اِنَّهَا تَذْكِرَةٌ فَمَنْ شَآءَ ذَكَرَهٗ فِيْ صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ مَّرْفُوْعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ بِاَيْدِيْ سَفَرَةٍ كِرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ (۸۰: ۱۱-۱۶)

4. It has been revealed in a very thorough manner by the being Who created the earth and the lofty skies.

Certainly not! This is but a reminder; so whoever wishes, can benefit from it. It is in esteemed pages, exalted and untouched, in the custody of scribes, honourable and faithful. (80: 11-16)

اَلرَّحۡمٰنُ عَلَى الۡعَرۡشِ اسۡتَوٰى ۝ لَهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَمَا بَيۡنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحۡتَ الثَّرٰى ۝[6][5]

This verse mentions the exaltedness of the Qur'ān and states the attributes of the Almighty which are reflected in this Book. He is the creator of the heavens and the earth. It is the requisite of His mercy that He not leave His creatures to themselves after creating them. Thus it is essential that just as He has arranged for the fulfilment of their material needs, He also provides them with guidance. Hence He has blessed them with intellect and intuition and revealed this Book as a further favour. This fact is also alluded to in the initial verses of Sūrah al-Raḥmān thus: اَلرَّحۡمٰنُ. عَلَّمَ الۡقُرۡاٰنَ.[6]

The implication is that today people who are rejecting the Qur'ān are not harming God or His Messenger in any way. In fact, they are depriving themselves of the greatest mercy of God.

The words "Who sits on the throne of governance" point to an attribute of the Almighty: He did not become aloof after creating the world; He is in fact running its affairs. He is the real sovereign of this universe. For this reason, He has informed people of His directives and laws through the Qur'ān. After this awareness, people who still do not listen will meet their fate on the day of accountability.

The words "whatever is in the heavens and in the earth and whatever is in between and whatever is below the earth are under His control" are meant to uproot the seed of polytheism from its roots: there is no part of this universe that is beyond God's control and jurisdiction. If someone has freedom in some sphere, then that too is because of God's design and plan. Thus a person should not think that he can escape from God or there is anyone besides Him who can given him refuge.

وَاِنۡ تَجۡهَرۡ بِالۡقَوۡلِ فَاِنَّهٗ يَعۡلَمُ السِّرَّ وَاَخۡفَى ۝[7]

In accordance with the principles of eloquent Arabic, parallel portion of the verse are suppressed because of concomitant indications. Ie: وَاِنۡ تَجۡهَرۡ بِالۡقَوۡلِ اَوۡ تُخَافِتۡ بِهٖ فَاِنَّهٗ يَعۡلَمُ الۡجَهۡرَ وَالسِّرَّ وَاَخۡفَى (and whether you say anything openly or secretly, He knows what is open, the hidden and what is even more hidden).

In this verse, the Prophet (sws) is assured from another angle: all his pleadings to God are heard by Him in whatever state he utters them. The purpose is to let him know

5. The most Merciful Who sits on the throne of governance. Whatever is in the heavens and in the earth and whatever is in between and whatever is below the earth are under His control.

6. It is the Merciful who has taught the Qur'ān.

7. Whether you speak openly or secretly; nothing is hidden from Him because He knows what is said secretly and what is even more hidden.

the consequence of this fact: when his Lord is aware of all his secrets, his path would be eased out by Him and he will be provided guidance from Him at every step. If there is a delay in any matter, it is because of certain a reason and benefit and it is actually for his own betterment. For more details, readers may look up what I have written while explaining verse 64 of Sūrah Maryam.

اَللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ لَهُ الْاَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰى ۝[8]

This verse directs the Prophet (sws) to completely rely on God and not go out of the way in reforming his enemies and worry himself. There is no god but God and in His presence, he does not need anyone.

The words "all good names belong to Him" are a treasure trove of assurance for the Prophet (sws). The assurance sounded to him in the previous verses is given in the light of the consequences of His exaltedness, His mercy, His sovereignty, His oneness and His knowledge. Yet these are not the only attributes of God. He possesses all good and lofty attributes. So, obviously the consequences of these attributes will manifest themselves for the Prophet (sws) in accordance with his circumstances. In other words, glad tidings are given to the Prophet (sws) in this part of the verse that all good attributes belong to God and they protect everyone. Whichever among them he seeks support of, he will gain its blessings and benefits. He does not need any support except them.

All scholars agree that here "names of God" actually refer to His attributes because His names actually express His attributes.

Section II: Verses (9-98)

In the previous section, the Prophet (sws) has been assured through the attributes of God. Coming up is the account of Moses (sws) in which this assurance and facts mentioned academically in the previous section are stated through a living example. In this anecdote, details of how God helped him in the trials he passed through before and after becoming a messenger are stated. A greater part of the phases which the Prophet (sws) still had to go through were unknown to him at that time/ This anecdote reflects those phases before him and also indicates to him the preparations needed. The impact of living examples is unparalleled. In particular, the anecdote of a prophet for another is like is own biography.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

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8. He is God; there is no deity besides Him. All good names belong to Him.

Text and Translation

وَهَلْ اَتٰىكَ حَدِيْثُ مُوْسٰى ۝٩ اِذْ رَاٰ نَارًا فَقَالَ لِاَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوْٓا اِنِّيْٓ اٰنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّيْٓ اٰتِيْكُمْ مِّنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ اَوْ
اَجِدُ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى ۝١٠ فَلَمَّآ اَتٰىهَا نُوْدِيَ يٰمُوْسٰى ۝١١ اِنِّيْٓ اَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ ۚ اِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ
طُوًى ۝١٢ وَاَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوْحٰى ۝١٣ اِنَّنِيْٓ اَنَا اللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِيْ ۙ وَاَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِذِكْرِيْ ۝١٤ اِنَّ
السَّاعَةَ اٰتِيَةٌ اَكَادُ اُخْفِيْهَا لِتُجْزٰى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعٰى ۝١٥ فَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَّا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ
هَوٰىهُ فَتَرْدٰى ۝١٦ وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِيْنِكَ يٰمُوْسٰى ۝١٧ قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ ۚ اَتَوَكَّؤُا عَلَيْهَا وَاَهُشُّ بِهَا عَلٰى غَنَمِيْ وَلِيَ
فِيْهَا مَاٰرِبُ اُخْرٰى ۝١٨ قَالَ اَلْقِهَا يٰمُوْسٰى ۝١٩ فَاَلْقٰىهَا فَاِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعٰى ۝٢٠ قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا تَخَفْ ۖ
سَنُعِيْدُهَا سِيْرَتَهَا الْاُوْلٰى ۝٢١ وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ اِلٰى جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَآءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوْٓءٍ اٰيَةً اُخْرٰى ۝٢٢ لِنُرِيَكَ
مِنْ اٰيٰتِنَا الْكُبْرَى ۝٢٣ اِذْهَبْ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ اِنَّهٗ طَغٰى ۝٢٤ قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِيْ صَدْرِيْ ۝٢٥ وَيَسِّرْ لِيْٓ اَمْرِيْ ۝٢٦ وَ
احْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّنْ لِّسَانِيْ ۝٢٧ يَفْقَهُوْا قَوْلِيْ ۝٢٨ وَاجْعَلْ لِّيْ وَزِيْرًا مِّنْ اَهْلِيْ ۝٢٩ هٰرُوْنَ اَخِي ۝٣٠ اشْدُدْ بِهٖٓ
اَزْرِيْ ۝٣١ وَاَشْرِكْهُ فِيْٓ اَمْرِيْ ۝٣٢ كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيْرًا ۝٣٣ وَّنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيْرًا ۝٣٤ اِنَّكَ كُنْتَ بِنَا بَصِيْرًا ۝٣٥ قَالَ
قَدْ اُوْتِيْتَ سُؤْلَكَ يٰمُوْسٰى ۝٣٦ وَلَقَدْ مَنَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً اُخْرٰٓى ۝٣٧ اِذْ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰٓى اُمِّكَ مَا يُوْحٰٓى ۝٣٨ اَنِ
اقْذِفِيْهِ فِي التَّابُوْتِ فَاقْذِفِيْهِ فِي الْيَمِّ فَلْيُلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ بِالسَّاحِلِ يَاْخُذْهُ عَدُوٌّ لِّيْ وَعَدُوٌّ لَّهٗ ۭ وَاَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ
مَحَبَّةً مِّنِّيْ ۚ وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلٰى عَيْنِيْ ۝٣٩ اِذْ تَمْشِيْٓ اُخْتُكَ فَتَقُوْلُ هَلْ اَدُلُّكُمْ عَلٰي مَنْ يَّكْفُلُهٗ ۭ فَرَجَعْنٰكَ اِلٰٓى
اُمِّكَ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ ۭ وَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا فَنَجَّيْنٰكَ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَفَتَنّٰكَ فُتُوْنًا ۭ فَلَبِثْتَ سِنِيْنَ فِيْٓ اَهْلِ
مَدْيَنَ ۙ ثُمَّ جِئْتَ عَلٰي قَدَرٍ يّٰمُوْسٰى ۝٤٠ وَاصْطَنَعْتُكَ لِنَفْسِيْ ۝٤١ اِذْهَبْ اَنْتَ وَاَخُوْكَ بِاٰيٰتِيْ وَلَا تَنِيَا فِيْ
ذِكْرِيْ ۝٤٢ اِذْهَبَآ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ اِنَّهٗ طَغٰى ۝٤٣ فَقُوْلَا لَهٗ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهٗ يَتَذَكَّرُ اَوْ يَخْشٰى ۝٤٤ قَالَا رَبَّنَآ اِنَّنَا
نَخَافُ اَنْ يَّفْرُطَ عَلَيْنَآ اَوْ اَنْ يَّطْغٰى ۝٤٥ قَالَ لَا تَخَافَآ اِنَّنِيْ مَعَكُمَآ اَسْمَعُ وَاَرٰى ۝٤٦ فَاْتِيٰهُ فَقُوْلَآ اِنَّا رَسُوْلَا
رَبِّكَ فَاَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۙ وَلَا تُعَذِّبْهُمْ ۭ قَدْ جِئْنٰكَ بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ ۭ وَالسَّلٰمُ عَلٰي مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الْهُدٰى ۝٤٧
اِنَّا قَدْ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيْنَآ اَنَّ الْعَذَابَ عَلٰي مَنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلّٰى ۝٤٨ قَالَ فَمَنْ رَّبُّكُمَا يٰمُوْسٰى ۝٤٩ قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِيْٓ اَعْطٰى
كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهٗ ثُمَّ هَدٰى ۝٥٠ قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ الْقُرُوْنِ الْاُوْلٰى ۝٥١ قَالَ عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّيْ فِيْ كِتٰبٍ ۚ لَا يَضِلُّ رَبِّيْ وَلَا
يَنْسَى ۝٥٢ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَّسَلَكَ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا سُبُلًا وَّاَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۭ فَاَخْرَجْنَا بِهٖٓ

اَزْوَاجًا مِّنْ نَّبَاتٍ شَتّٰى ﴿٥٣﴾ كُلُوْا وَارْعَوْا اَنْعَامَكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّاُولِي النُّهٰى ﴿٥٤﴾ مِنْهَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ وَفِيْهَا
نُعِيْدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً اُخْرٰى ﴿٥٥﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَرَيْنٰهُ اٰيٰتِنَا كُلَّهَا فَكَذَّبَ وَاَبٰى ﴿٥٦﴾ قَالَ اَجِئْتَنَا لِتُخْرِجَنَا
مِنْ اَرْضِنَا بِسِحْرِكَ يٰمُوْسٰى ﴿٥٧﴾ فَلَنَاْتِيَنَّكَ بِسِحْرٍ مِّثْلِهٖ فَاجْعَلْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّا نُخْلِفُهٗ نَحْنُ وَ
لَاۤ اَنْتَ مَكَانًا سُوًى ﴿٥٨﴾ قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمُ الزِّيْنَةِ وَاَنْ يُّحْشَرَ النَّاسُ ضُحًى ﴿٥٩﴾ فَتَوَلّٰى فِرْعَوْنُ فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهٗ
ثُمَّ اَتٰى ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالَ لَهُمْ مُّوْسٰى وَيْلَكُمْ لَا تَفْتَرُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا فَيُسْحِتَكُمْ بِعَذَابٍ ۚ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنِ افْتَرٰى ﴿٦١﴾
فَتَنَازَعُوْۤا اَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ وَاَسَرُّوا النَّجْوٰى ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالُوْۤا اِنْ هٰذٰنِ لَسٰحِرٰنِ يُرِيْدٰنِ اَنْ يُّخْرِجٰكُمْ مِّنْ اَرْضِكُمْ
بِسِحْرِهِمَا وَيَذْهَبَا بِطَرِيْقَتِكُمُ الْمُثْلٰى ﴿٦٣﴾ فَاَجْمِعُوْا كَيْدَكُمْ ثُمَّ ائْتُوْا صَفًّا ۚ وَقَدْ اَفْلَحَ الْيَوْمَ مَنِ اسْتَعْلٰى ﴿٦٤﴾
قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسٰۤى اِمَّاۤ اَنْ تُلْقِيَ وَاِمَّاۤ اَنْ نَّكُوْنَ اَوَّلَ مَنْ اَلْقٰى ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ بَلْ اَلْقُوْا ۚ فَاِذَا حِبَالُهُمْ وَعِصِيُّهُمْ يُخَيَّلُ
اِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ اَنَّهَا تَسْعٰى ﴿٦٦﴾ فَاَوْجَسَ فِيْ نَفْسِهٖ خِيْفَةً مُّوْسٰى ﴿٦٧﴾ قُلْنَا لَا تَخَفْ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْاَعْلٰى ﴿٦٨﴾
وَاَلْقِ مَا فِيْ يَمِيْنِكَ تَلْقَفْ مَا صَنَعُوْا ؕ اِنَّمَا صَنَعُوْا كَيْدُ سٰحِرٍ ؕ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السّٰحِرُ حَيْثُ اَتٰى ﴿٦٩﴾ فَاُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ
سُجَّدًا قَالُوْۤا اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّ هٰرُوْنَ وَمُوْسٰى ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالَ اٰمَنْتُمْ لَهٗ قَبْلَ اَنْ اٰذَنَ لَكُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَكَبِيْرُكُمُ الَّذِيْ عَلَّمَكُمُ
السِّحْرَ ۚ فَلَاُقَطِّعَنَّ اَيْدِيَكُمْ وَاَرْجُلَكُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ وَّلَاُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ فِيْ جُذُوْعِ النَّخْلِ ۫ وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ اَيُّنَاۤ اَشَدُّ
عَذَابًا وَّاَبْقٰى ﴿٧١﴾ قَالُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْثِرَكَ عَلٰى مَا جَآءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالَّذِيْ فَطَرَنَا فَاقْضِ مَاۤ اَنْتَ قَاضٍ ؕ اِنَّمَا
تَقْضِيْ هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا ﴿٧٢﴾ اِنَّاۤ اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّنَا لِيَغْفِرَ لَنَا خَطٰيٰنَا وَمَاۤ اَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
خَيْرٌ وَّاَبْقٰى ﴿٧٣﴾ اِنَّهٗ مَنْ يَّاْتِ رَبَّهٗ مُجْرِمًا فَاِنَّ لَهٗ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ لَا يَمُوْتُ فِيْهَا وَلَا يَحْيٰى ﴿٧٤﴾ وَمَنْ يَّاْتِهٖ مُؤْمِنًا قَدْ
عَمِلَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ الدَّرَجٰتُ الْعُلٰى ﴿٧٥﴾ جَنّٰتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ وَ
ذٰلِكَ جَزٰٓؤُا مَنْ تَزَكّٰى ﴿٧٦﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَوْحَيْنَاۤ اِلٰى مُوْسٰۤى ۙ اَنْ اَسْرِ بِعِبَادِيْ فَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ طَرِيْقًا فِي الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا ۙ لَّا
تَخٰفُ دَرَكًا وَّلَا تَخْشٰى ﴿٧٧﴾ فَاَتْبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ بِجُنُوْدِهٖ فَغَشِيَهُمْ مِّنَ الْيَمِّ مَا غَشِيَهُمْ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَاَضَلَّ فِرْعَوْنُ
قَوْمَهٗ وَمَا هَدٰى ﴿٧٩﴾ يٰبَنِيْۤ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ قَدْ اَنْجَيْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ عَدُوِّكُمْ وَوٰعَدْنٰكُمْ جَانِبَ الطُّوْرِ الْاَيْمَنَ وَنَزَّلْنَا
عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوٰى ﴿٨٠﴾ كُلُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا فِيْهِ فَيَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبِيْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّحْلِلْ
عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِيْ فَقَدْ هَوٰى ﴿٨١﴾ وَاِنِّيْ لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَنْ تَابَ وَاٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدٰى ﴿٨٢﴾ وَمَاۤ اَعْجَلَكَ عَنْ

قَوْمِكَ يٰمُوْسٰى ﴿٨٣﴾ قَالَ هُمْ اُولَآءِ عَلٰٓى اَثَرِىْ وَعَجِلْتُ اِلَيْكَ رَبِّ لِتَرْضٰى ﴿٨٤﴾ قَالَ فَاِنَّا قَدْ فَتَنَّا قَوْمَكَ مِنْۢ
بَعْدِكَ وَاَضَلَّهُمُ السَّامِرِىُّ ﴿٨٥﴾ فَرَجَعَ مُوْسٰٓى اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ غَضْبَانَ اَسِفًا ۚ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَلَمْ يَعِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَعْدًا
حَسَنًا ۚ اَفَطَالَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْعَهْدُ اَمْ اَرَدْتُّمْ اَنْ يَّحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَاَخْلَفْتُمْ مَّوْعِدِىْ ﴿٨٦﴾ قَالُوْا مَآ
اَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلْكِنَا وَلٰكِنَّا حُمِّلْنَآ اَوْزَارًا مِّنْ زِيْنَةِ الْقَوْمِ فَقَذَفْنٰهَا فَكَذٰلِكَ اَلْقَى السَّامِرِىُّ ﴿٨٧﴾
فَاَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَّهٗ خُوَارٌ فَقَالُوْا هٰذَآ اِلٰهُكُمْ وَاِلٰهُ مُوْسٰى ۙ فَنَسِىَ ﴿٨٨﴾ اَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ اَلَّا يَرْجِعُ اِلَيْهِمْ
قَوْلًا ۙ وَّلَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا نَفْعًا ﴿٨٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ قَالَ لَهُمْ هٰرُوْنُ مِنْ قَبْلُ يٰقَوْمِ اِنَّمَا فُتِنْتُمْ بِهٖ ۚ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ
الرَّحْمٰنُ فَاتَّبِعُوْنِىْ وَاَطِيْعُوْٓا اَمْرِىْ ﴿٩٠﴾ قَالُوْا لَنْ نَّبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ عٰكِفِيْنَ حَتّٰى يَرْجِعَ اِلَيْنَا مُوْسٰى ﴿٩١﴾ قَالَ يٰهٰرُوْنُ
مَا مَنَعَكَ اِذْ رَاَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوْٓا ﴿٩٢﴾ اَلَّا تَتَّبِعَنِ ۖ اَفَعَصَيْتَ اَمْرِىْ ﴿٩٣﴾ قَالَ يَبْنَؤُمَّ لَا تَاْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِىْ وَلَا بِرَاْسِىْ ۚ
اِنِّىْ خَشِيْتُ اَنْ تَقُوْلَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِىْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِىْ ﴿٩٤﴾ قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يٰسَامِرِىُّ ﴿٩٥﴾ قَالَ
بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوْا بِهٖ فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ اَثَرِ الرَّسُوْلِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذٰلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِىْ نَفْسِىْ ﴿٩٦﴾ قَالَ فَاذْهَبْ
فَاِنَّ لَكَ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ اَنْ تَقُوْلَ لَا مِسَاسَ ۖ وَاِنَّ لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّنْ تُخْلَفَهٗ ۚ وَانْظُرْ اِلٰٓى اِلٰهِكَ الَّذِىْ ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ
عَاكِفًا ۭ لَنُحَرِّقَنَّهٗ ثُمَّ لَنَنْسِفَنَّهٗ فِى الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا ﴿٩٧﴾ اِنَّمَآ اِلٰهُكُمُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِىْ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۭ وَسِعَ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ عِلْمًا ﴿٩٨﴾

And has the story of Moses come to your knowledge when he saw a flame, he said to his family: "Wait here you people I see fire so that I can bring an ember from it for you or perhaps am able to find some information there about the way." (9-10)

Then when he reached near it, a voice called: "Moses! It is I, your Lord. So, take off your shoes because you are in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā. And I have chosen you. So, intently listen to what is being revealed to you. Indeed, I alone am God; there is no deity besides Me. So, worship Me and be diligent in the prayer to keep Me in remembrance. Indeed, the Hereafter is sure to come. I shall strive to keep it hidden so that every person is rewarded for his deeds. Thus, anyone who does not believe in the Hereafter and follows his desires should not make you negligent of the prayer lest you perish." (11-16)

"And what is this in your hands, O Moses!" He replied: "This is my staff. I lean on it and through it bring down leaves for my flock. And I also have other uses in it." God said: "Place it on the ground, O Moses." He placed it. So, suddenly it became a slithering serpent. God said: "Pick it up and fear not. We shall return it again to its first shape. And draw your hand towards your arm. It will emerge from there white without any illness as a second sign so that We may make you observe some great signs of Ours." (17-23)

"Go to the Pharaoh. He has become a great tyrant." He prayed: "Lord! Open my

chest for me and make my task easy for me and free my tongue from its impediment so that people are able to understand what I say. And by appointing my brother Aaron from my family a helper for me strengthen my back, and make him share my responsibility so that as much as possible we are able to extol and glorify you and spread your word far and wide. Indeed, you have been continuously watching over our affairs." God said: "Your request is granted, O Moses!" (24-36)

And at another instance as well We did a favour to you when We revealed to your mother what is being revealed to you: "Put him in a box; then place the box in the river." Then the river should cast it on the bank so that he may pick it up who is My enemy also and of this child too. And I shed a reflection of My love on you and so that you be brought up under My supervision. At the time when your sister would go repeatedly and would say to them: "Should I inform you of those people who can bring up this child?" Thus We returned you to your mother so that her eyes are soothed and she does not grieve. (37-40)

And you had killed a person. Then We delivered you from this grief and We fully tested you. Then you stayed for many years among the people of Madyan. Then you have reached here at a specially appointed time, O Moses! And I chose you for My special assignment. (40-41)

"Go you and your brother with My signs and be not negligent in remembering Me. Go both of you to the Pharaoh. Indeed, he has become very rebellious. So, invite him softly; he may well pay heed or have fear." (42-44)

They said: "Our Lord! We fear that he will be cruel to us or his rebelliousness may increase even further." God said: "Fear not! I am with you hearing and seeing everything. So, go to him and tell him: 'We both are messengers of your Lord; so let the Israelites go with us and do not put them through torment. We have also brought to you a big sign of your Lord. And peace is on them who follow the guidance. It has been revealed to us that there is however torment for those who deny and turn away.'" (45-48)

The Pharaoh asked: "Who is the Lord of both of you, O Moses?!" He replied: "Our Lord is one who has given everything its physical shape; then gave guidance." The Pharaoh said: "Then what is the situation of the previous nations?" Moses replied: "Their knowledge is with my Lord in a register. My Lord neither errs nor forgets," – He Who has made the earth a cradle for you and made in it pathways for you and sent down water from the heavens; thus from it We produced various types of diverse plants. Eat and graze your cattle. There are signs in this for those who have intellect. From it We have created you, to it We shall return you and from it bring you out again. (49-55)

And We showed him all Our signs. In spite of this, he denied and rejected. He said: "Moses! Have you come to us to turn us out from our land by a spell of your magic? Then we too shall bring a similar magic against you. So, appoint a specific location between us and yourself, some place in the middle. Neither should we breach it nor should you." (56-58)

He said: "For you the promised day is the day of festivity and that people should be

made to gather before midday." Thus the Pharaoh withdrew from there and gathered all his manoeuvres, then came for combat. Moses said: "Be forsaken! Do not impute falsehood to God so that He may crush you through some calamity. And he who imputes falsehood to God shall not succeed." (59-61)

At this, they began mutually consulting and secretly advising one another. They said: "Both of them are very adept magicians. They want to turn you out from your land through their magic and uproot this exemplary system of yours. So, bring together all your schemes; then come united against them and today only he shall succeed who dominates." (62-64)

They said: "Moses! Either you put forth or it can be that we put forth first?" He said: "In fact, you put forth." So, all of a sudden their ropes and their staffs, because of their magic, seemed to him as if they are sliding. At this, Moses felt a little scared in his heart. We said: "Fear not! Certainly, it is you who shall remain dominant and that which is in your hands place it on the ground. Whatever they have fashioned, it will swallow it. This trick they have played is a mere trick of a magician and wherever a magician may go, he does not succeed." So the magicians fell down in prostration. They cried out: "We profess faith in the Lord of Moses and Aaron." (65-70).

The Pharaoh said: "You attested to him without my permission? Indeed, he is your mentor who has taught magic to you. So, I shall have your hands and feet severed from opposite directions and crucify you on trunks of palm trees and you shall come to know whose punishment among us is more stern and more lasting." (71)

They replied: "We shall certainly not give you preference over those clear signs that have come before us nor over the Being Who has created us. So, do what you want to. Whatever you can do relates to this worldly life. We professed faith in our Lord so that He may forgive our sins and also forgive the magic to which you have compelled us. And God alone is better and eternal." (72-73)

Indeed, whoever comes before his Lord as a wrongdoer, for him is Hell. He shall neither die nor live in it. And those go before Him as believers who would have done righteous deeds also, then it is such people for whom there are high ranks. For them, will be orchards of eternal residence beneath which streams flow. They shall live in them forever. And this is the reward of those who adopt purity. (74-76)

And We revealed to Moses: "Set off with My servants at night. Then make a dry path for them in the sea. Neither will you be in danger of being pursued nor have any fear of drowning." So, the Pharaoh followed him with his armies. Ultimately, they were covered by the sea with that which covered them. And the Pharaoh led astray his nation; he did not show it the right path. (77-78)

O Israelites! We delivered you from your enemy and promised you a time at the blessed side of Ṭūr and sent down upon you *mann* and *salwā*: "Eat of the pure things given by Us and do not be rebellious after receiving this favour lest My wrath descends on you and he on whom My wrath descends will be ruined. And for those who repent, accept faith and do good deeds, then adhere to guidance, for them I am

very Forgiving.” (79-82)

And what made you leave your people and come over early, O Moses? He replied: “These people are also right behind me and Lord! I have come early to earn your pleasure.” God said: “Then We have put your nation through a trial behind you and Sāmirī has led it astray.” At this, Moses returned to his nation in great anger and grief and said: “People of My Nation! Had not your Lord made a very good promise with you? Has much time passed on you or did you want that your Lord’s wrath descend on you; for this reason, you have broken My covenant?” (83-86)

They replied: “We did not break our promise with you out of our own will. In fact, we had been made to carry the burden of the nation’s jewellery. We cast it off and in this way Sāmirī showed this trick.” (87)

So, he extracted a calf for them: a body from which the sound of a bull would come out. At this, they said: “Is this your god and that of Moses, but he has forgotten it.” Would not these people reflect that neither can it respond to anything nor can it inflict any harm or give benefit? (88-89)

And Aaron had already said to them: “O People of My Nation! You have been put through trial by it. Your Lord is the Most Merciful God. Hence you should follow me and listen to me.” They said: “We shall now keep worshipping this calf until Moses returns to us.” (90-91)

Moses said: “Aaron! When you saw them going astray, what stopped you from not following me? Have you disobeyed My directive?” He replied: “O the one given birth to by my mother! Grasp not my beard nor my head. I feared that you would but say: ‘You have created a rift among the Israelites and did not give regard to what I said.’” (92-94)

Moses asked: “What is your matter, O Sāmirī?” He replied: “I saw that which others did not; so, I picked up a handful from the footprints of the messenger; then cast it into the calf. Thus did my soul prompt me.” Moses said: “Then be off with you. Now, for life, you will continue to say: ‘No one should touch me,’ and there is another promised time too for you which will never be deferred from you. And look at this deity to which you strongly had attached yourself. We shall burn it; then scatter it in the sea. Only God is your deity; there is no other deity except Him. His knowledge embraces everything.” (95-98)

Explanation

وَهَلْ اَتٰىكَ حَدِيْثُ مُوْسٰى ۘ﴿۹﴾[9]

This style has been used in the Qur’ān to warn and threat as well as to urge and exhort. Here occasion and context shows that it is used in the latter meaning. The implication is that has the Prophet (sws) heard the account of Moses (sws). God shall narrate it to him. In it, he will find all the answers to questions that confront him in his

9. And has the story of Moses come to your knowledge.

current or future phases of preaching. It should be kept in mind that the reason that the anecdote of Moses (sws) is repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'ān in various styles is that it was the legacy of Moses' (sws) nation that has been transferred to the Prophet's nation. Before the Prophet (sws), it was Moses (sws) who had been given the *sharī'ah*. The precarious phases which Moses (sws) faced in his preaching and the way he was helped by God were a source of great guidance and inspiration for the Prophet (sws). At the same time, the mistakes committed by the Israelites at every step and the guidance they received to mend their ways were a great source of teaching for the followers of the Prophet (sws). Readers may give due importance to this anecdote as such. It is, in fact, their own tale and not that of the others'.

اِذۡ رَاٰ نَارًا فَقَالَ لِاَهۡلِهِ امۡكُثُوۡۤا اِنِّیۡۤ اٰنَسۡتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّیۡۤ اٰتِیۡكُمۡ مِّنۡهَا بِقَبَسٍ اَوۡ اَجِدُ عَلَی النَّارِ هُدًی ﴿۱۰﴾[10]

Now begins the anecdote of Moses (sws) from the time he was called upon to accept the responsibility of God's messenger. This took place when he was returning from Madyan with his family.

It is evident from the word اٰنَسۡتُ that he had not seen a big fire burning but only some sort of a flame which shimmered and then disappeared, and perhaps no one else saw it. From here, this word also began to be used to mean "to see and observe intently."

Had it been a blazing fire, Moses (sws) would have indicated that a fire was burning at a distance and that he would go there to find out the way from anyone there; in case, there was none there, he would return with an ember to shield them from the biting cold.

فَلَمَّاۤ اَتٰىهَا نُوۡدِیَ یٰمُوۡسٰۤی ﴿۱۱﴾ اِنِّیۡۤ اَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخۡلَعۡ نَعۡلَیۡكَ ۚ اِنَّكَ بِالۡوَادِ الۡمُقَدَّسِ طُوًی ﴿۱۲﴾[11]

As is evident from the verses, the first directive given to Moses (sws) was to take off his shoes. This is not only among the etiquette of cleanliness but also a norm of decency and humility. Thus, taking off shoes in the mosques has been made mandatory precisely for this reason. They are places of gathering in God's presence for which both cleanliness and humility are essential. Some people are of the opinion that if the shoes are clean, they can be worn in the mosque. However, this is not correct because this would be against decency and humility which is a also condition to enter the mosques just as cleanliness is.

The reason for asking Moses (sws) to take off his shoes is that he was in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā. This is a vast flat land situated at the base of mount Sinai. All parts of the earth have been created by God and do not have any superiority over one another

10. When he saw a flame, he said to his family: "Wait here you people I see fire so that I can bring an ember from it for you or perhaps am able to find some information there about the way."

11. Then when he reached near it, a voice called: "Moses! It is I, your Lord. So, take off your shoes because you are in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā."

except if some part has some special association with God. The valley of Sinai has some special distinctions: God spoke to Moses (sws) here and made His reflection manifest on mount Sinai. For this reason, it is called sacred in this verse.

وَاَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوْحٰى ﴿١٣﴾[12]

The word اِسْتِمَاع means "to listen attentively." This sentence is meant to focus the attention of Moses (sws) before uttering what is really meant to be communicated to him. Evident from this verse is the honour and respect which Moses (sws) acquired after being appointed God's messenger and also the great responsibility which was imposed on him because in this capacity.

اِنَّنِيْٓ اَنَا اللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِيْ ۙ وَاَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِذِكْرِيْ ﴿١٤﴾[13]

This is the first instruction given to Moses (sws) and it is something which has been given to all messengers of God. An analysis of this verse shows that three things are mentioned in it.

Firstly, the belief of monotheism is alluded to because it occupies the central place in religion. As far as believing in God is concerned, the world has always believed in Him. Denying Him is a fashion of current times. However, associating partners with Him has always afflicted mankind in some form or the other. Thus every messenger was first instructed in this belief and every messenger launched an offensive against polytheism the foremost.

The second instruction given to Moses (sws) was to worship God. This worship God's right alone. As God, He must be worshipped and since He has no partner, it is essential that this worship be done without associating anyone with Him. One of the consequences of this worship, as has been explained at other instances, is that He be obeyed too. Just as it is not permissible to worship anyone, it is also not permissible to willingly obey anyone against His directives. The real essence of worship is to express one's servitude before God, revive one's promise of obeying Him and of showing sincerity to Him and to keep Him in remembrance. Thus it is absolutely against one's obligation to God to glorify Him but to fashion out a *sharī'ah* or to acknowledge this right for someone else. This is polytheism. I have presented arguments to validate this in my book *Ḥaqīqat-i Shirk o Tawḥīd* (The Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism).

The third thing is the prayer. The word used with it is إقامة. It means to diligently offer it. It is mentioned to keep God is permanent remembrance. Whether it is offered individually or collectively, it is the greatest means to protecting God's remembrance and also its highest and most effective manifestation. For this reason, after professing

12. "And I have chosen you. So, intently listen to what is being revealed to you."

13. "Indeed, I alone am God; there is no deity besides Me. So, worship Me and be diligent in the prayer to keep Me in remembrance."

belief in monotheism, all messengers were asked to observe it the foremost. Through the prayer, a person keeps in remembrance his covenant of servitude with God and it is through it that an *ummah* keeps in remembrance its covenant made with God. If an individual or a group of people show neglect in offering the prayer, it will be as if they have shown neglect to the whole religion. This has been explained under verse 59 of Sūrah Maryam. Readers may look it up.

إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ اٰتِيَةٌ أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا لِتُجْزٰى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعٰى ﴿١٥﴾[14]

This verse a reminder of the hereafter and the word used for it is اٰتِيَة. It does not merely refer to its coming but the fact that it is destined to come. This is because it occurs in the form of a subject-noun (*fā'il*) and not a verb, and thus has an element of stress in it. It may be kept in mind that people have generally not rejected the hereafter in the absolute sense. Rather they have expressed it being improbable. For this reason, not only has the Qur'ān validated its arrival but also emphasized its certainty.

The verse expresses the real purpose of its arrival: people may necessarily be rewarded or punished for their deeds. If this does not happen, it would mean that this world has not been created by someone merciful and compassionate. In such a case, it becomes a place of amusement and this obviously is totally illogical. The words بِمَا تَسْعٰى also highlight the fact that it is essential that every person be treated according to his deeds only. If a person has satanic deeds but attains the status of the righteous or is absolved of accountability because of someone's intercession or because of his own lineage, it would only mean that it is not character and deeds which carry weight before God; rather intercession and lineage that does.

The words أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا form a very subtle parenthetical sentence. It is not just said: "I will hide the Day of Judgement." The words used are: "I will strive to keep it hidden." Those who have an appreciation of literary Arabic know that the word أَكَادُ has incorporated the meaning that even though God has concealed the Day of Judgement and will continue to do so, but it is very eager to get exposed. In verse 187 of Sūrah al-A'rāf, this subject[15] is stated by words: ثَقُلَتْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ لَا تَاْتِيْكُمْ اِلَّا بَغْتَةً ؕ (both the heavens and the earth are burdened by its weight; it will suddenly come to you).

فَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَّا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ فَتَرْدٰى ﴿١٦﴾[16]

The antecedent of the pronoun in عَنْهَا is صَلٰوة and that of بِهَا is السَّاعَةَ.

14. "Indeed, the Hereafter is sure to come. I shall strive to keep it hidden so that every person is rewarded for his deeds."

15. For its detailed explanation, see: vol. 3, 404.

16. Thus, anyone who does not believe in the Hereafter and follows his desires should not make you negligent of the prayer lest you perish."

Someone can regard this interpretation of the verse to be the result of ambiguity in the pronouns which is considered to be a defect of a discourse. However, it is a defect when there is no indication found in the discourse to ascertain their antecedents. In the presence of a clear indication, this ambiguity is not a defect; it, in fact, imparts brevity to a sentence. Examples of this usage can be found in the works of the eloquent literati.

Here the indication is very apparent. After a mention of the prayer and the hereafter two verbs are used: يَصُدَّنَّ and يُؤْمِنُ. Everyone having a flair for language instantly knows that the first of these collocates with صَّلٰوةَ (the prayer) and the second with السَّاعَةَ (the hereafter). Among past scholars, Abū Muslim also holds this opinion and I consider it to be correct in all respects.

On the basis of philosophy of religion too, if one reflects, it becomes evident that a person who does not have a firm belief in the hereafter will always regard the prayer to be a burden. The Qur'ān specifies it thus:

وَاِنَّهَا لَكَبِيْرَةٌ اِلَّا عَلَى الْخٰشِعِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَظُنُّوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ مُّلٰقُوْا رَبِّهِمْ وَاَنَّهُمْ اِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُوْنَ (٢: ٤٥-٤٦)

And, undoubtedly, this is exacting but not to those who fear the Almighty, who think that they have to meet their Lord and that to Him alone they also have to return. (2:45-46)

It is also similarly mentioned in the Qur'ān that following one's desires and forsaking the prayer mutually necessitate one another. It is stated in Sūrah Maryam:

فَخَلَفَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ اَضَاعُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهَوٰتِ فَسَوْفَ يَلْقَوْنَ غَيًّا (١٩: ٥٩)

Then, after them, those wicked succeeded them who squandered the prayer and followed their desires. So, soon they will face the consequences of going astray. (19:59)

It is evident from these verses that after monotheism, it is the prayer to which Moses (sws) was directed the foremost and it was the hereafter which he was specially reminded of. This is also in consonance with the history of God's prophets, as is evident from Sūrah Maryam. However, the misfortune of the Jews is lamentable that they squandered the prayer and also became indifferent to the hereafter. It may be a cause of amazement for the readers that their scriptures do mention the ritual of animal sacrifice, but the prayer, specially the one in the temple, is mentioned at just one place in chapter 26 of the book of Deuteronomy. Some of their jurists even think that Moses (sws) never bade them to offer the prayer and if it is mentioned in the Torah, then it is because of later editors who added it. As for their belief in the hereafter, their Sadduccees never believed in it. Their view is that reward and punishment takes place in this world. It seems that the Murijites among the Muslims

have also taken their belief from them.

The words "lest you perish" at the end is meant to warn the addresees. If they become indifferent to the prayer and to the hereafter, they will be ruined. These two things protect the whole religion and safeguard people from the trials of Satan. He who becomes negligent of them is as if he has consigned himself to Satan.

وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِيْنِكَ يٰمُوْسٰى ﴿١٧﴾[17]

The word يَمِيْن means "a hand" irrespective of being right or left. Several examples of this can be found in classical Arabic literature.

Obviously, this question is not meant to solicit an answer. It is meant to express affection and liking. It is similar to a question posed to a child by a person even though he knows what is in his hands. This question was asked about something that would in future would become the source of miracles at the hands of Moses (sws).

قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ ۚ اَتَوَكَّؤُا عَلَيْهَا وَاَهُشُّ بِهَا عَلٰى غَنَمِيْ وَلِيَ فِيْهَا مَاٰرِبُ اُخْرٰى ﴿١٨﴾[18]

هش means to bring down leaves from a tree. 'Ukbarī is of the opinion that the words اَهُشُّ بِهَا عَلٰى غَنَمِيْ mean اَقُوْمُ بِهَا عَلٰى غَنَمِيْ (I protect and tend to my herd through it).[19] If linguisic evidence can support this meaning, it would be very apt, but 'Ukbarī has not presented any evidence. So I have followed its common meaning in this regard.

It is clear from Moses' answer that he did not merely respond to the question; he went much further and elaborated quite a lot. He could have just said that there was a staff in his hand. But he fully understood that the question posed was not merely an inquiry, it carried a great amount of affection in it. Thus he went into detail to answer it anticipating that this would open up the way to more exchange. If the questioner is very loved and sought after, prolonging the conversation with him is a natural desire.

قَالَ اَلْقِهَا يٰمُوْسٰى ﴿١٩﴾ فَاَلْقٰهَا فَاِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعٰى ﴿٢٠﴾[20]

The verses express what ensued next.

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17. "And what is this in your hands, O Moses!"

18. He replied: "This is my staff. I lean on it and through it bring down leaves for my flock. And I also have other uses in it."

19. Abū al-Baqā' 'Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Abdullāh al-'Ukbarī, *Imlā' mā manna bihī al-Raḥmān min wujūh al-i'rāb wa al-qirā'āt*, vol. 2, (Lahore: Maktabah 'ilmiyyah, n.d.), 120.

20. God said: "Place it on the ground, O Moses." He placed it. So, suddenly it became a slithering serpent."

قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا تَخَفْ ۖ سَنُعِيدُهَا سِيرَتَهَا الْأُولَىٰ ﴿٢١﴾[21]

Fearing a snake is something natural. Moses (sws) was scared because he thought that the staff he could use to kill the snake with had itself become a snake. He was thence assured by the Almighty.

وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَىٰ جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ آيَةً أُخْرَىٰ ﴿٢٢﴾[22]

At the same time, a second directive was given to Moses (sws), as is spelled out in the verse.

The verse specifies that the whiteness of the hand would not be because of any ailment; it would actually be a sign from God. This clarification refutes the Bible in which the whiteness of the arm is regarded to be because of the ailment of leprosy. It may also be noted that this was not meant to be a permanent sign. The words of the Qur'ān bear witness that this would only happen when Moses (sws) would draw his hand into his gown and then take it out. An ailment could be suspected if the hand had permanently turned white. And if this had happened, then how could it have been regarded as a miracle?

The words آيَةً أُخْرَىٰ are not an indepedent sentence. They form a second accusative of state (*ḥāl*). The first was that the hand would emerge white not because of any ailment and the second was that it would emerge as a sign from God. This aspect has been taken into account in the translation.

لِنُرِيَكَ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا الْكُبْرَى ﴿٢٣﴾[23]

This verse forms permanent glad tidings for Moses (sws): apparently, these are just two miracles; however, they are not merely two; concealed in them are some other great ones; when he faces trials later in life, he will see how these miracles manifest from them to express the power and might of God.

Thus details of all these miracles which Moses (sws) showed to the Pharaoh are presented in the Torah. In the Qur'ān too, the ones which are mentioned show their majestic nature. It was this staff which created a way in the sea for Moses (sws) and the Israelites, and from it he was able to make twelve springs gush out from the mountain.

After imparting Moses (sws) with the teaching of monotheism and the hereafter and after equipping him with miracles, he was asked to go to the Pharaoh to try to make him fear God and His wrath since he had become very tyrannical. Here a question

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21. God said: "Pick it up and fear not. We shall return it again to its first shape."

22. "And draw your hand towards your arm. It will emerge from there white without any illness as a second sign."

23. "So that We may make you observe some great signs of Ours."

may arise: according to the established practice of God, miracles are given to the Prophets when their nations vehemently demand them and the purpose of giving them these miracles is conclusive communication of the truth so that those who are not using their intellect and are persistent on this demand are left with no excuse. If this is the case, then why was an exception created for Moses (sws) as he was given these miracles as soon as he was chosen as a prophet? The answer to this question is that he was being sent to such a tyrannical and cruel ruler who was his extreme enemy both in his individual and in his collective capacity. As soon as the Pharaoh would have known that Moses (sws) was sent from God, he would have immediately ordered to execute him, let alone listen to and understand his message. In fact, he had already ordered for his execution when he had killed a Copt. However, Moses (sws) had sneaked away to Madyan and hence he could not succeed in his plan. If Moses (sws) had gone to such a tyrannical and despotic ruler to warn him in the capacity of God's Messenger, how could he even have tolerated to listen to him? He could only have been prepared to listen to him if he had shown a sign that would have struck awe in him. Thus, at the very onset, the Almighty equipped Moses (sws) with two miracles through the help of which he remained secure from every onslaught of his enemies and, as is evident from succeeding verses, that as soon as he came to the Pharaoh he presented these miracles before him. The purpose was to caution him that if he indulged in some foul play, Moses (sws) had not come to him empty handed: he had a staff which could smash all conceit and arrogance to pieces.

اِذۡهَبۡ اِلٰى فِرۡعَوۡنَ اِنَّهٗ طَغٰى ﴿۲۴﴾[24]

This is was the first campaign assigned to Moses (sws). Details of the Pharaoh's tyranny are mentioned in detail in the explanation of Sūrah al-A'rāf. He regarded himself to be the supreme God and was regarded as an avatar of the greatest deity of the Egyptians: the Sun. How despotic and oppressive he was can be sufficiently gauged from the fact that he had ordered that all male off-spring born of the Israelites in his kingdom should be put to death or cast into the sea. Only girls were allowed to live so that they could serve as slave-maidens. How can there be two opinions about the rebellious nature of such a person? Since Moses (sws) was fully aware of this nature; in fact, had suffered because of it, the Almighty has not pointed to any details of his rebelliousness.

Here it should be kept in mind that God's Messengers foremost address and warn the leaders and chiefs of their society. This is because it is through them that the whole society is administered. If they are reformed, the whole society becomes quickly reformed and everyone is awe-inspired by the logic and persuasive nature of the call of the prophets. However, if these leaders instead choose to stubbornly deny,

24. "Go to the Pharaoh. He has become a great tyrant."

then this too has a positive aspect for the preaching of the prophets: the hollow nature of their logic becomes evident to their followers. If they later accept the truth, they do so with full insight and comprehension and this insight creates in them the power to conquer the hearts of people. Hitherto, they were fishermen who would catch fish from the sea and later they become people who grab people to lead them to the path of truth. Contrary to this, movements who begin their campaigns through public propaganda rely on inciting the emotions of people. It is because of their participation that these movements prosper and remain functional as long as this participation continues. Sense and reason have no role in them and neither can they ever have. It cannot be denied that emotions have a strong role but if only they are relied upon, one can easily know the consequence.

قَالَ رَبِّ اشۡرَحۡ لِیۡ صَدۡرِیۡ ﴿۲۵﴾ وَ یَسِّرۡ لِیۡۤ اَمۡرِیۡ ﴿۲۶﴾ وَ احۡلُلۡ عُقۡدَةً مِّنۡ لِّسَانِیۡ ﴿۲۷﴾ یَفۡقَهُوۡا قَوۡلِیۡ ﴿۲۸﴾ وَ اجۡعَلۡ لِّیۡ وَزِیۡرًا مِّنۡ اَهۡلِیۡ ﴿۲۹﴾ هٰرُوۡنَ اَخِی ﴿۳۰﴾ اشۡدُدۡ بِهٖۤ اَزۡرِیۡ ﴿۳۱﴾ وَ اَشۡرِكۡهُ فِیۡۤ اَمۡرِیۡ ﴿۳۲﴾ كَیۡ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِیۡرًا ﴿۳۳﴾ وَّ نَذۡكُرَكَ كَثِیۡرًا ﴿۳۴﴾ اِنَّكَ كُنۡتَ بِنَا بَصِیۡرًا ﴿۳۵﴾ قَالَ قَدۡ اُوۡتِیۡتَ سُؤۡلَكَ یٰمُوۡسٰی ﴿۳۶﴾[25]

As soon as Moses (sws) came to know that he had been appointed a messenger and was required to go to the Pharaoh in this capacity to preach to him, he immediately uttered the supplication cited in the verses. Every word of this supplication shows how heavy Moses (sws) regarded this burden to be and how earnestly he pleaded before God to help him in fulfilling its responsibilities. Leaders who are slaves of worldly status live and die in their infatuation for leadership. Yet the prophets of God are devoid of any such desire. When God chooses them for leadership, they tremble when they imagine its responsibilities and pray to God that if He has burdened them with this responsibility, He should provide them with the strength to bear it and help and guide them at every step.

Consider Moses' words: قَالَ رَبِّ اشۡرَحۡ لِیۡ صَدۡرِیۡ. First of all, Moses prayed for inner peace and satisfaction. If the responsibility is onerous and a person is fully aware of its requisites, the heart of every sensitive individual feels burdened. This is not a sign of weakness; in fact, it shows how conscientous he is. Prophets of God do not demand prophethood; on the contrary, as indicated earlier, they are given this responsibility from God. For this reason, they are naturally worried and apprehensive about carrying it out in the best way. This burden in the heart can only be done away with by God's

25. He prayed: "Lord! Open my chest for me and make my task easy for me and free my tongue from its impediment so that people are able to understand what I say. And by appointing my brother Aaron from my family a helper for me strengthen my back, and make him share my responsibility so that as much as possible we are able to extol and glorify you and spread your word far and wide. Indeed, you have been continuously watching over our affairs." God said: "Your request is granted, O Moses!"

grace. He alone instils inner strength and provides guidance and conviction for future phases. It is only then that the heart is comforted and morale boosted. It may be kept in mind here that the prophets of God are not imparted knowledge and conviction in one go. They are given these provisions in accordance with their needs and circumstances. On their part, they keep yearning for more.

Next he prayed: وَ يَسِّرْ لِيْٓ اَمْرِيْ. After requesting God to give him peace of mind and inner satisfaction, Moses (sws) implores God to ease out the path for him and make the circumstances conducive for his success. No doubt, the task is difficult but God's grace can remove all impediments and make the path smooth to tread.

His subsequent words وَ احْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّنْ لِّسَانِيْ beseech God in a very humble way to grant him eloquence in speech in order to make his preaching impactful. It may be kept in mind that in those days, the sole means of communication was oratory and effective communication. For this reason, orators and speaker were respected the most in those times. Such was the extent of this in Arabia that the most powerful speaker would actually end up becoming the leader of his tribe. Without mesmerizing his audience through words, no one in those times could discharge the responsibilities of a leader in the optimum way.

Today the invention of the printing press has increased the importance of the written word and in fact it now occupies primary significance. If a person is able to able to secure help of the printing press, he can claim to surpass Demosthenes in oratory even though he may not be able to articulate a few sentences effectively. However, before the invention of the press, speech and oratory had great importance. This was specially true for those who had leadership roles. It is evident from the Qur'ān that Moses (sws) was not a powerful speaker. Though this trait is not a requisite for prophethood yet, as indicated earier, it has great significance in preaching one's message. Thus when Moses (sws) was given the responsibility of a prophet, he felt this deficiency in him and among others things, he prayed to God to bless him with this skill.

Realizing this deficiency in himself, he also requested God to make his elder brother Aaron (sws) his partner. It is evident from both the Torah and the Qur'ān that Aaron (sws) was a very eloquent orator. Moses (sws) rightly thought that if he could obtain his help, his own shortcoming would be taken care of.

In Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, his prayer is mentioned in the following words:

وَاَخِيْ هٰرُوْنُ هُوَ اَفْصَحُ مِنِّيْ لِسَانًا فَاَرْسِلْهُ مَعِيَ رِدْاً يُّصَدِّقُنِيْٓ ۡ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اَنْ يُّكَذِّبُوْنِ (٢٨ : ٣٤)

And my brother Aaron is more eloquent than me. Send him with me also as my helper that he may support me. I fear that these people will reject me. (28:34)

It is clearly evident from this verse that the real need for which Moses (sws) requested for the help of his brother Aaron (sws) was because he was a powerful

speaker. He wanted to fill the void of his own deficiency through the skill of his brother so that he could present his message to people in a more effective way.

In Sūrah al-Shu‘arā’, precisely this aspect has been stated thus:

وَيَضِيْقُ صَدْرِىْ وَلَا يَنْطَلِقُ لِسَانِىْ فَاَرْسِلْ اِلٰى هٰرُوْنَ (٢٦: ١٣)

And my chest is in discomfort and my tongue is also not fluent; so send message to Aaron. (26:13)

It is evident from these verses that Moses (sws) not a very powerful orator; but there are no grounds to believe that he would stammer. This is actually what the Torah says. It is from there that it entered *tafsīr* books and then in order to authenticate it, exegetes fabricated an incident. The extent of veracity of the Torah can be gauged from the fact that it regards the whiteness of Moses’ hand to be due to leprosy. It is quite probable for those who regard their prophet to be a patient of leprosy to ascribe stammering to him as well.

Nevertheless there is nothing in the Qur’ān that indicates he would stammer. The request found in the words وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّنْ لِّسَانِىْ يَفْقَهُوْا قَوْلِىْ is not to relieve him of stammering but to bless him with the power of oratory. This was essential for him in order to effectively discharge his duty as God’s Messenger. The request made was in a very humble style. He never requested God to make him a powerful speaker who conquers the hearts of people; on the other hand, he very humbly requested God to bless him with fluent speech so that people were able to understand. This prayer is not necessarily from a person who suffers from stammering. Even a very articulate speaker prays and should pray for this ability. At times, thoughts arise in such a tumultuous way in the heart of a very eloquent person that he finds himself at a loss to express them orally or in written form. Moses (sws) was not a person who merely voiced a slogan like common people; he wanted to teach and explain the facts and secrets of religion and that too in front of people who were not only vehemently denying him but were also after his life. Moreover, Moses (sws) did not want to do his job in a perfunctory way; his desire was to vanquish the hearts of his adversaries. A change of heart was not expected from them; so he requested his Lord to bless him with the prowess and expression to make them understand his message.

In short, the notion that Moses (sws) used to stammer has no basis. Regardless of the fact that just as God protects His messengers from moral shortcomings, He also protects them from physical defects, the most important point is that the Qur’ān does not in any way corroborate this notion. Under the sarcastic accusation of the Pharaoh وَلَا يَكَادُ يُبِيْنُ (he cannot speak clearly) cited in verse 52 of Sūrah al-Zukhruf, readers can see read more on this topic.

In the next part of his prayer وَاجْعَلْ لِّىْ وَزِيْرًا مِّنْ اَهْلِىْ هٰرُوْنَ اَخِى Moses (sws) has requested for

Aaron (sws) as his helper. In the verses of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ and Sūrah al-Shu'arā' cited earlier, he had made this request to cater for his own deficiency in oratory. He reckoned that his brother Aaron (sws) would effectively fill this void in him. He was his elder brother and he also trusted his character and conduct and most of all he was an acclaimed and eloquent speaker, as is evident from the Torah. When a person of all these traits is found in one's own family, it would be quite natural that Moses (sws) regard him to be the most worthy of fulfilling this role. The words مِّنۡ اَهۡلِیۡ (from my family) should not give the wrong impression that this selection had anything to do with family bias. This could have been the case if only the family was the basis of this choice. However, when the basis of selection is attributes, there is no chance of familial bias playing any role. In fact, the guidance obtained from this prayer is that when a person prays for God's grace, he should first of all include his family in this prayer on the condition that they are righteous. Readers may look up the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Baqarah where the prayer of Abraham (sws) is mentioned.

Consider next the words اُشۡدُدۡ بِهٖۤ اَزۡرِیۡ وَ اَشۡرِكۡهُ فِیۡۤ اَمۡرِیۡ . The word اَزۡر means "back." The request to God by Moses (sws) is to strengthen his back by making Aaron (sws) his partner so that he can bear the burden of his responsibility in befitting way. It is evident from the words وَ اَشۡرِكۡهُ فِیۡۤ اَمۡرِیۡ that the request made by Moses (sws) was not merely to make Aaron (sws) his companion but to actually make him a prophet as well: he too should be responsible before God in this capacity and he also should be directly guided and protected by God. This was a very significant request because as has been explained under verse 53 of Sūrah Maryam it is not known if ever a prophet was made the helper of another prophet. However, God showed favour to Moses (sws) and accepted his request. Leaders who are slaves to the pleasures of this world feel so jealous that even for small gains and positions, they do not let others come near them. Yet, a true comprehension of entrusted responsibilities makes even a prophet pray to God to make someone share his task.

Here it may be noted that in the Torah, Aaron (sws) is not mentioned the way he is in the Qur'ān. In the Torah, he is mentioned as a companion and spokesman of Moses (sws) who was actually responsible for the prank played by Sāmirī. The Qur'ān has unveiled the true character of these personalities.

The verses كَیۡ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِیۡرًا وَّ نَذۡكُرَكَ كَثِیۡرًا refer to the fact that the reason for making Aaron (sws) his partner in prophethood was that both could together glorify and remember God as much as possible. Obviously, here individual glorification and remembrance is not implied; it refers to its collective form and actually means discharging the responsibility of prophethood. The public and private lives of all those who follow prophets of God in guiding people are an epitomy of glorification and remembrance. Their prayers in the mosque constitute glorification and remembrance and their tasks at their work places also constitute these. In short, what they do is the same regardless of their locus. In verse 14 of this *sūrah*, it has been stated: اَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِذِكۡرِیۡ (adhere to the

prayer to remember me) and then in verse 41 both Moses (sws) and Aaron are directed to go to the court of the Pharaoh with the guidance: وَلَا تَنِيَا فِيْ ذِكْرِيْ (both of you do not be negligent in remembering Me). Obviously, here remembrance refers to the responsibility of warning the Pharaoh.

There is a literary element found in the adjacent mention of glorification and remembrance. The former is meant to absolve someone of negative traits and the latter affirms positive traits in someone and both these are necessary to engender a relationship with God on the right footing. In other words, things which are against the majesty of God, His attributes and liking should be negated and things which are in harmony with His majesty, attributes and directives should be affirmed and expressed. Both these things come together to constitute the belief and character of a believer. Moreoever, negation has priority over affirmation. Unless a person declares to rebel against all those who false deities, he cannot be faithful to God. Before saying اِلَّا اللّٰه it is essential to utter: لَآ اِلٰهَ.

The words اِنَّنَا كُنَّا بِنَا بَصِيْرًا are a plea in favour of this prayer just as Zacharias mentioned the words مَا كُنْتُ بِدُعَآئِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا (I have never remained deprived regarding acceptance of my prayer) in favour of his prayer. They have already been explained under verse 4 of Sūrah Maryam. The best plea before God is not one's deeds; rather, it is pleading before Him on the basis of His grace and compassion. When a person asks with such faith in God Who has given him everything without asking, how can he deprive that person when he actually asks from Him? Here Moses (sws) too has pleaded to God by referring to His dealing with himself and his brother. His implication is: you have always watched over us; now that we are preparing to uplift your cause, how can we be deprived of Your grace.

Consider next the part: قَالَ قَدْ اُوْتِيْتَ سُؤْلَكَ يٰمُوْسٰى. The words سُؤْلَ and سُؤَال have the same meaning: request and plea. It is stated that the request of Moses (sws) has been granted. Here there is a great amount of affection found in the invocative يٰمُوْسٰى and the words in which his prayer was accepted also show great splendour. As soon as his prayer ended, he was given glad tidings of its acceptance. In other words, everything was accepted in the blink of an eye without any hesitation and without any exception. Obviously, included in this acceptance is also the prayer of Moses (sws) which he made to increase his power of speech. He was blessed with this power and Aaron (sws) was made his helper. If a prayer is made for the right objective at the right time in a sincere way, it is accepted by God.

وَلَقَدْ مَنَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً اُخْرٰٓى ﴿٣٧﴾ اِذْ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰٓى اُمِّكَ مَا يُوْحٰٓى ﴿٣٨﴾ اَنِ اقْذِفِيْهِ فِى التَّابُوْتِ فَاقْذِفِيْهِ فِى الْيَمِّ فَلْيُلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ بِالسَّاحِلِ يَاْخُذْهُ عَدُوٌّ لِّيْ وَعَدُوٌّ لَّهٗ ؕ وَاَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِّنِّيْ ۚ وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلٰى عَيْنِيْ ﴿٣٩﴾[26]

26. And at another instance as well We did a favour to you when We revealed to your mother

In order to allay the apprehensions of Moses (sws), just as the Qur'ān has given him glad tidings of the acceptance of his prayer, similarly he was reminded of another favour of God at this juncture: when he was born, there was a grave danger that the heinous scheme[27] of killing the male off spring of the Israelites chalked out by the Pharaoh would also put him in harms way. At that time, not only did God protect Moses (sws) through His power and wisdom but in fact made the Pharaoh bring him up. The purpose of this reminder is that he should not fear the Pharaoh from whom God protected him in such a profound way. He is with him.

The words اِذۡ اَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلٰٓى اُمِّكَ مَا يُوۡحٰٓى refer to the fact that the scheme made by God to protect Moses (sws) was revealed to his mother was the same that is now being revealed to him. The purpose is to make evident to him that he has received many great favours in the past. Though he must have had some broad knowledge of this incident through his mother, yet how exactly it was divinely planned must have become known to him through revelation. The words مَا يُوۡحٰٓى is referring to this aspect.

The nature of divine revelation received by Moses' mother was obviously of the nature of an inspiration and a brainwave. In other words, the Almighty instilled it in her heart and she became sure that it was from God. اَنِ اقۡذِفِيۡهِ فِى التَّابُوۡتِ فَاقۡذِفِيۡهِ فِى الۡيَمِّ فَلۡيُلۡقِهِ الۡيَمُّ were words of revelation that were sent to her. It is evident from Exodus (2:2-6) that when Moses (sws) was born the scheme of killing the male offspring of the Israelites was in full swing. His mother at first hid him from these oppressive elements. According to the Torah, this period was 3 months. However, she continuously feared his safety. According to the Torah, she finally made a basket from canes and placed it near the river shore under a shelter thinking that he may be seen by some sympathetic person. On the other hand, the Qur'ān states that God inspired her to put the child in a small trunk and place it in the river and not worry for He will have the child returned to her and make him His messenger. Obviously, the account of the Qur'ān is more logical. Without divine indication, how could she have the courage to take this such a step? Even after divine indication, one can only imagine what would have gone through her mind. However, since through divine indication God had assured her that He would protect the child, she took this bold step. In verse 7 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, this divine indication is explained thus: فَاِذَا خِفۡتِ عَلَيۡهِ فَاَلۡقِيۡهِ فِى الۡيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِىۡ وَلَا تَحۡزَنِىۡ ۚ اِنَّا رَآدُّوۡهُ اِلَيۡكِ وَجَاعِلُوۡهُ مِنَ الۡمُرۡسَلِيۡنَ.[28]

The details of what Moses' mother felt can be seen in the *tarsier* of Sūrah al- al-

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what is being revealed to you: "Put him in a box; then place the box in the river." Then the river should cast it on the bank so that he may pick it up who is My enemy also and of this child too. And I shed a reflection of My love on you and so that you be brought up under My supervision.

27. Details of the political motives behind this heinous scheme are explained in detail under verses 109-112 of Sūrah al-A'rāf.

28. And when you have fear about him, consign him to the river and fear and grieve not. We will then bring him back to you and will make him from among Our messengers.

Qaṣaṣ.

The words فَلْيُلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ بِالسَّاحِلِ يَأْخُذْهُ عَدُوٌّ لِّي وَعَدُوٌّ لَّهُ are not part of the divine revelation sent to her. Had this been the case, they would have been grammatically an answer to a command. The ل on فَلْيُلْقِهِ is that of a command (and not an answer to a command). For this reason, it is structured in this format. Those who have translated it as an answer to a command are mistaken. Its literal meaning would be "so, let the sea cast it on the shore." Thus, on the one hand, the Almighty sent a revelation to Moses' mother to put him in a trunk and place the trunk in the river and, on the other hand, ordered the river to cast it on the shore so that he picks it who is God's enemy and also that of the child.

To put it another way, God has expressed how He showed favour to Moses (sws) through His might, majesty and wisdom. It was His planning that the Pharaoh who was both His own enemy and that of Moses (sws) be responsible for his upbringing. The Pharaoh was God's enemy because he himself claimed divinity and how could he tolerate someone else with him in this matter? Details of the Pharaoh's enmity with Moses (sws) have been mentioned earlier. Not only this, the greatest manifestation of God's planning was that Moses (sws) was nourished and brought up by someone who was his greatest enemy and that of his nation. Thus, by his very hands, the Pharaoh called for his own doom, to save himself from which he had undertook several measures.

The words وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِّنِّي depict the divine scheme God chalked out to endear Moses (sws) to their common enemy. As it is, every child is adorable. Every upright person feels affection as soon as he sees one. It is evident from the Torah[29] that Moses (sws) was extra-ordinarily cute. And then God Himself cast the reflection of love on him. Who can imagine the cuteness of a child who has been blessed with charm from God. When such an adorable and innocent looking child is seen all alone in a cane basket meandering in the waves of a river, who will not tremble at this sight? The Pharaoh was only the Pharaoh! Not a stone! It thus happened that the Pharaoh and his wife wandered off for a walk on the shores of the Nile. They saw that basket. When they saw a child in it, they thought that it must be of the Israelites; his apprehensive parents, fearing for his death, must have consigned him to the waves of the river; they must have chanced their luck expecting the child to stay safe. Seeing the child created waves of sympathy in them. And it was the Pharaoh's wife[30] who was more inclined in this regard. Women by nature are tender-hearted towards children. It is evident from verse 11 of Sūrah Taḥrīm that the Pharaoh's wife was very soft and kind.

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29. See: Exodus, 4:2; Hebrews, 11:23, Acts, 4:20.

30. In the Torah, it is mentioned that it was the Pharaoh's daughter and her two friends and not his wife had picked up Moses (sws). The Qur'ān has corrected this. For its details, readers my look up the explanation of verse 9 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ.

Nevertheless, this divine scheme made Moses (sws) reach the palace of the Pharaoh fearing whom his mother had consigned him to the waves.

The co-ordinated clause of وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلٰى عَيْنِيْ is suppressed due to concomitant indications. Many examples of this style can be seen in the earlier *sūrahs*. If the whole sentence is gauged, the sense would be: "We cast Our reflection of love on you so that even your enemies adore you and so that you are brought up before My eyes." It was obviously this reflection which became a guardian of Moses (sws). This guardian protected him in such a way that not only he had no fear from someone who was after his life, that enemy became infatuated with him. It is this guardian of love that God has called "My eyes" in لِتُصْنَعَ عَلٰى عَيْنِيْ. In other words, by casting His reflection of love on him, God protected Moses (sws).

اِذْ تَمْشِيْٓ اُخْتُكَ فَتَقُوْلُ هَلْ اَدُلُّكُمْ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّكْفُلُهٗ ؕ فَرَجَعْنٰكَ اِلٰٓى اُمِّكَ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَ لَا تَحْزَنَ ؕ وَ قَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا فَنَجَّيْنٰكَ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَفَتَنّٰكَ فُتُوْنًا ۬ فَلَبِثْتَ سِنِيْنَ فِيْٓ اَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ ۙ ثُمَّ جِئْتَ عَلٰى قَدَرٍ يّٰمُوْسٰى ﴿۴۰﴾[31]

A large part of the account of Moses (sws) has been covered in this verse. Things that did not need a reminder are suppressed here and only a few others have been broadly expressed here and then the whole discourse connects to the main topic.

First, the scheme is alluded to which the Almighty adopted to restore Moses (sws) to his mother after he had been consigned to the river. Earlier verse 7 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ was referred to. It was stated that when God directed Moses' mother to place him in the river, He also told her that soon He will have him returned to her. In the verses under discussion, this is only referred to, but in verses 9-13, details are mentioned thus: When the Pharaoh's wife saw the child, she told the Pharaoh that the boy was adorable and that he should not have him killed; he would soothe the eyes of both and they could adopt him and gain benefit. On the other hand, though Moses' (sws) mother had consigned the boy to the sea at the intimation of the Almighty but grief and worry were killing her. She asked Moses' (sws) sister to keep an eye on the box. So she kept track of it secretly. Ultimately, she came to know that it had reached near the palace of the Pharaoh and there the waves have expelled it on the shore. She reached the palace and saw that a wet nurse was trying to feed him but he was not willing to put his mouth to her breasts. She then gave a suggestion to the Pharaoh's wife that she can inform them of a household who will fully take care of the child and become affable with him. Since the Pharaoh and his wife were already worried on Moses (sws) not drinking milk, the suggestion was accepted and in this manner Moses

31. At the time when your sister would go repeatedly and would say to them: "Should I inform you of those people who can bring up this child?" Thus We returned you to your mother so that her eyes are soothed and she does not grieve. And you had killed a person. Then We delivered you from this grief and We fully tested you. Then you stayed for many years among the people of Madyan. Then you have reached here at a specially appointed time, O Moses!

(sws) returned to his mother's lap.

In the Torah, this incident is mentioned in the following words:

> Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" "Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. (Exodus, 2:7-9)

The difference in the accounts of the Torah and the Qur'ān does not need any comment. Every sensible person can see that the Qur'ān's account is more logical as well as natural.

Indefinite tenses are used in اِذۡ تَمۡشِیۡۤ اُخۡتُكَ فَتَقُوۡلُ. This makes me repeatedly think Moses' sister had to go to the Pharaoh's wife many times in order to satisfy her. It was only then that she was able to convince her. In this way, Moses (sws) was returned to his mother and her fears were put to rest. I have tried to do justice to the translation by keeping in view these indefinite tenses and the fact that incomplete verbs are suppressed before them. If the translation does not fully convey this meaning, then the fault is entirely mine.

Consider next the last part: وَقَتَلۡتَ نَفۡسًا فَنَجَّیۡنٰكَ مِنَ الۡغَمِّ وَفَتَنّٰكَ فُتُوۡنًا ؕ فَلَبِثۡتَ سِنِیۡنَ فِیۡۤ اَهۡلِ مَدۡیَنَ ۙ ثُمَّ جِئۡتَ عَلٰی قَدَرٍ یّٰمُوۡسٰی. Among the things that happened to Moses (sws) after being picked from the river until his adolescence, only the incident of his killing a Copt and his stay in Madyan are referred to here. This reference too is for the same reason as the above mentioned incident was reminded of: to give solace and satisfaction to Moses (sws) that the Lord Who has helped him in such precarious situations and adverse circumstances will help him in his future struggles also. Here since only a brief reference is made, I will present details in my own words in the light of what is mentioned in Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ. For explanation of the words and verses, its *tafsīr* can be looked up.

Consider verses 14-19 of that *sūrah*. The whole incident can be understood from these verses thus:

When Moses (sws) reached the age of mental maturity, he was deeply perturbed at the oppression to which his nation was subjected. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt and for this reason a separate settlement was allocated for them. They only went to the city for service and labour without compensation and there they were badly beaten and humiliated by their Coptic masters. All this had a very telling effect on the sense of honour of Moses (sws), and at times he would forcefully defend his people. The followers of the Pharaoh feared that if the Israelites have an effective leader, they will gain courage and become a danger for their own leadership. For this reason, they became enemies of Moses (sws) and it is quite probable that those at the helm of affairs debarred him from entering the city. However, Moses (sws) would secretly go

to the city to remain aware of the circumstances of his people. On one such occasion when he secretly entered the city, he saw an Israelite and a Copt engaged in a brawl. The Israelite called Moses (sws) for help. His call stirred his emotions and he tried to help him. At this, the Copt turned to him. Moses (sws) was a strong person. He threw a punch at him and it was such a mighty blow that the Copt died on the spot.

Moses (sws) was very disturbed at this incident. The killing was entirely unitentional on his par and he regarded himself to be accountable before God for this. Thus he immediately repented and God forgave him. Upon receiving this favour from God, Moses (sws) promised himself that in future he would never defend criminals. Next day when he again furtively entered the city, the same Israelite once again asked for his help. Once more he was fighting and this time with another Israelite. As soon as he saw Moses (sws), he asked for his help but Moses (sws) scolded him and called him a mischievous individual. However, he advanced forward to reconcile the two. The Israelite thought that he had made some mistake and that Moses (sws) actually had advanced to grab him. He feared that this time he would receive a fatal punch. So, he cried out telling Moses (sws) that on the previous day he had taken a life and now he was after his life. This is not what reformers do, he contended; it seems that Moses (sws) wants to be a tyrant in the land.[32]

It thus became evident to Moses (sws) that the killing of the Copt was no longer a secret. Then it further happened that a person came running from the far side of the city and informed Moses (sws) that the rulers were plotting to kill him and sincerely advised him to leave the city.

At that time, Moses (sws) prayed to God to save him from the evil of the evil and reposing trust in Him set off for Madyan. When he reached, he sat at one of its wells or fountains for some time. There he saw a bunch of shepherds watering their flocks and also two women who were waiting for their turn. Moses (sws) felt concern for them and asked them of the ordeal they were facing and that why were they standing behind with their herd. They replied that their father had grown very old and as a result they had to attend to their herd and that it was not possible for them to force their way into the crowd; so they had decided to wait for the other shepherds to leave and that unless they leave with their herds it was not possible for them to provide water to their flock. After listening to their tale, sentiments of sympathy arose in Moses (sws). He got up and made their flocks drink water and once he had done this job, he turned back and sat in the shadow of a tree. He then prayed to God: "God whatever you send down to me at this time, I am in need of it."

Both these women were daughters of Shu'ayb (sws). After a while, one of them returned walking bashfully and modestly and told him that their father was calling him

32. I will discuss this question in detail whether this statement was from the Copt or a foolish utterance by the Israelite himself. Here the purpose is to only present the incident in a simple way so that the implications of the verses under discussion are highlighted.

to compensate him for his effort in making their herd drink water. Moses (sws) then came to Shu‘ayb and narrated his whole story to him. Shu‘ayb assured him and allayed his fears: God has actually saved him from the unjust.

One of his daughters requested her father to hire Moses (sws) as a helping hand since he was a strong and trustworthy person and would prove to be fit for the task at hand.

Shu‘ayb offered the hand of one of his daughters to Moses (sws) on the condition that he work for him for eight years and if Moses (sws) pleases he can increase this period to ten years; there is no pressure on him in this regard. He further told Moses (sws) that the latter would find him to be an upright person.

Moses (sws) accepted both the proposal and the condition. He replied that whichever of these two periods he is able to fulfil should be left to his discretion and he should not be pressurized regarding this. God is a witness to this covenant.

After completing the promised time, Moses (sws) left with his family for Egypt. When they reached the mount of Ṭūr, he saw the reflection observing which he set off to get some embers of fire. He ended up being appointed the messenger of God.

The reason that all this detail has been presented from Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ is that it has been rather concisely covered in the verses of Sūrah Ṭāhā under discussion. In the absence of this detail, these verses cannot be fully understood.

Let us now reflect on the components of the verse.

وَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا فَنَجَّيْنٰكَ مِنَ الْغَمِّ: The circumstances in which the incident of the killing of the Copt took place have been discussed earlier. Neither had Moses (sws) any intention of killing him nor did he have any other sentiment except helping an oppressed person. This in itself is a very commendable thing which is found in every upright and decent individual. For this reason, whatever Moses (sws) did was in itself correct but the will of God was such that his blow became fatal. He knew that though the killing was unintentional but such was the gravity of the matter that he could be held accountable before God. This made him very sorrowful. A God-fearing person never gives himself allowance; he holds himself accountable even in things in which they can find an excuse if they want. Moses (sws) did not have any tribal bias as well. Thus it is possible that the person he had helped by regarding him to be oppressed might himself be the oppressor. Thus in the details mentioned earlier it can be seen that when the next day Moses (sws) saw that Israelite fighting with another Copt and asking for this help, he scolded him be saying that he was a mischievous person. If Moses (sws) had any prejudice for his people, he would have felt proud that he had accomplished a great feat for his nation, let alone being sorrowful. Thus this too could not have been a source of assurance for him. For this reason, he was sad on this incident and he sought forgiveness from his Lord. God forgave him and this forgiveness relieved him of his grief.

In my opinion, if fear of revenge from the rulers was part of this grief, then it was to

the extent that he thought that they were very oppressive and no justice could be expected of them. Had the government of these rulers been a just one, Moses (sws) would have presented the whole case before them and would have obeyed their verdict. However, consigning one's self to the despotic rule of the Pharaoh was tantamount to suicide. Obviously, this state of affairs must also have been a source of sorrow for Moses (sws). To relieve himself of this sorrow, he ultimately left his homeland and went off to Madyan.

It has been explained at numerous instances in this exegesis that if prophets of God commit any sin whether before their ministry or after it, it is never because they follow any evil intent; it is because they exceed limits in following or seeking the truth. This in itself is not a sin. However, since they are a benchmark of the truth, God checks them on such occasions so that any imbalance is set right. This mistake of Moses (sws) was in fact an act of virtue. However, as just mentioned, even if an act of virtue exceeds limits, it is checked at times – especially in the case of prophets of God.

Consider next the phrase: وَفَتَنّٰكَ فُتُوْنًا. فتن فتونا means to try and test. When a goldsmith purifies gold, this word is also used to refer to it. The same word is used by the Almighty for trials and tribulations to which Moses (sws) was subjected and tested thereby. The purpose was to fully prepare him for the mission he would be entrusted with. The extent of the tough life he was used to in Egypt and the precarious circumstances in which he migrated from there can be gauged from details referred to earlier. Even when in Madyan, he became a shepherd for Shu'ayb's herd for eight or ten years. It was while returning from Madyan that he suddenly was made a messenger of God. After that the trying circumstances he faced can be read in Sūrah al-A'rāf, in the current *sūrah*, in Sūrah Qaṣaṣ and in other *sūrahs* as well. In short, right from his birth to his last breath, he passed through continuous trials with each being more intense than the previous one.

Regarding these trials, one needs to keep in mind that they are essential for the training and instruction of people. It is through them that the higher qualities found in them are polished further. Thus, trials must not be avoided. He who is struck with fear because of his enemy and runs off is like one who runs off from his own training. If there is any cause of fear, it is not the trial but that one may fail in it.

These trials are do not come merely through hardships; they also happen through favours and blessings. In trials of the former type, God wants to inculcate patience in a person and in trials of the latter type, God wants to engender gratitude in a person. And it is on patience and gratitude that all noble attributes are based. It is through the perfection of these two attributes that a person can achieve the bliss of being a satisfied soul in this world. And the consequence of this bliss is the eternal bliss of hereafter which the Qur'ān calls رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً.

A subtle question regarding the wisdom of the Qur'ān is that amongst the trials of patience and gratitude, which one is more difficult. Sages have different views in this

matter. My own inclination in the light of the Qur'ān is that the trial of gratitude is tougher. The percentage of people who pass this trial is very little. There are some who show perseverance in the wake of hardships and succeed but there are few who remain on the straight path even after being blessed with favours. Verse 18 of Sūrah Sabā points to this: وَقَلِيْلٌ مِنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّكُوْرُ (very few are My servants who are grateful).

This too should be kept in mind that the higher the status God wants to grant someone, the more and the harder will be his trails. Thus one is horrified to read about the trials which prophets of God have faced. Other people cannot even imagine enduring these trials.

The real thing to fear in these trials is not the fear of facing them; there are other things that need to be feared. Firstly, as pointed out earlier, a person should fear failing a trial. Secondly, what is to be feared even more is that he is relieved of trials. The reason is that it is the established practice of God that a person who repeatedly fails is at times relieved from His trials. In the terminology of the Qur'ān, this is called *imhāl* (respite to do evil). This is the greatest punishment that can be given to a person or a nation from God. After that all doors of hope are shut.

The words فَلَبِثْتَ سِنِيْنَ فِيْٓ اَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ do not specify the number of years Moses (sws) lived in Madyan. However, with reference to the details presented earlier in the light of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, it is evident that in accordance with the covenant he made, the minimum number of years he must have spent there was eight and the maximum must have been ten. What is apparently known is that during this time he was a shepherd to Shu'ayb's herd.

After alluding to all the incidents mentioned earlier, it was stated: ثُمَّ جِئْتَ عَلٰى قَدَرٍ يّٰمُوْسٰى. In other words, whatever happened was according to God's plan after passing through various phases, he reached exactly the place where he was appointed a messenger. The implication is that the God Who has protected him in all phases of his life from birth until that time and had all his missions fulfilled through their mutual enemy will create opportunities for him and provide resources.

وَاصْطَنَعْتُكَ لِنَفْسِيْ ﴿٤١﴾[33]

The word اِصْطَنَاع means "train someone for a specific objective." The implication is that if God made him pass through many trials, it was to train for him a special task. Now this special task is being assigned to him. He should carry it out by trusting God.

اِذْهَبْ اَنْتَ وَاَخُوْكَ بِاٰيٰتِيْ وَلَا تَنِيَا فِيْ ذِكْرِيْ ﴿٤٢﴾[34]

The directive mentioned in verse 24 earlier is repeated here. The verses in between

33. And I chose you for My special assignment.

34. "Go you and your brother with My signs and be not negligent in remembering Me."

were meant to provide assurance to Moses (sws). After giving him glad tidings of acceptance of his supplication and reminding him of the past blessings he had received, it is stated that he and his brother should go to warn the Pharaoh. Earlier on Moses (sws) alone was given this directive but now Aaron (sws) was also included in it because he was also made a messenger at Moses' request.

The words وَلَا تَنِيَا فِيْ ذِكْرِيْ are a further emphasis on the directive given in verse 14. In other words, they should not show negligence in remembering God. It has already been stated under verse 34 that remembering God here means both through the prayer and through preaching. Every task of a prophet constitutes God's remembrance. When he prays, he in fact receives strength from God for reminding people. The actual fountainhead of true preaching is God. It is through this source that he receives spiritual fodder. If the relationship with this source weakens, the preaching mission of the prophet loses its vigour and if the relationship with it is completely severed, this preaching mission becomes a tool in the hands of Satan even though the name of God may be taken in it.

اِذْهَبَآ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ اِنَّهٗ طَغٰى ﴿۴۳﴾[35]

Details of the Pharaoh's tyranny have been mentioned under verse 24. Here it needs to be considered that both Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) are addressed. Thus this directive was necessarily given later when Moses (sws) had reached Egypt because in the valley of Ṭuwā Aaron (sws) was not alongside him.

فَقُوْلَا لَهٗ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهٗ يَتَذَكَّرُ اَوْ يَخْشٰى ﴿۴۴﴾[36]

This directive was not given merely because Moses (sws) was not going to the Pharaoh as a helpless Israelite but as an envoy of God and he also had the staff in his hand, but because softness is the nature of every preaching effort. Prophets of God are sent to educate and reform people; hence their preaching and warning has the element of the affection of a teacher and the sympathy of a well-wisher. It is not known about any prophet imposing himself on people. Even in the toughest of circumstances their style of address and manner of response is very soft, effective and sympathetic. Imposing one's self in an arrogant way is the trait of leaders who have become slaves of this world. It is actually the basis of the satanic propaganda of current times.

The words لَعَلَّهٗ يَتَذَكَّرُ اَوْ يَخْشٰى express the purpose of the teaching and preaching of prophets: reminding people and making them fear God. Those who have the trait of indifference in them awaken from their slumber as soon as a prophet reminds them. It was as if they had lost their way. As soon as they are guided, they return to the right

35. "Go both of you to the Pharaoh. Indeed, he has become very rebellious."
36. "So, invite him softly; he may well pay heed or have fear."

path. There are others who have gone a little too astray. If such people have the ability to accept faith, they return to the right path when they are warned by a prophet. Here the first of these words (يَتَذَكَّرُ) refers to the first category of people and the second (يَخْشٰى) to the second.

قَالَا رَبَّنَآ اِنَّنَا نَخَافُ اَنْ يَّفْرُطَ عَلَيْنَآ اَوْ اَنْ يَّطْغٰى ﴿٤٥﴾[37]

The preposition عَلٰى is used after يَفْرُطَ. This incorporates the meaning of "launching a hasty onslaught against someone," in the expression. The implication is that the Pharaoh is already annoyed and how will he allow them to even begin any conversation. He will either kill them before they speak or make a plan to do so or will become even more rebellious.

In the supplication depicted in this verse, both Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) have together made the request. As referred to earlier under verse 43, this is an indication of the fact that these directives were given after he had reached Egypt when Aaron (sws) had joined him.

قَالَ لَا تَخَافَآ اِنَّنِيْ مَعَكُمَآ اَسْمَعُ وَاَرٰى ﴿٤٦﴾[38]

The detail concealed in the words "I am with you" does not need elaboration and the splendour and grandeur in "hearing and seeing everything" also does not need any explanation. When God is with them hearing and seeing all and it is He Who is sending them on a new mission, then there is no need to fear if everyone in the world becomes their enemy.

فَاْتِيٰهُ فَقُوْلَآ اِنَّا رَسُوْلَا رَبِّكَ فَاَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۖ وَلَا تُعَذِّبْهُمْ ۭ قَدْ جِئْنٰكَ بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ ۭ وَالسَّلٰمُ عَلٰي مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الْهُدٰى ﴿٤٧﴾[39]

The status of Moses (sws) was that of a messenger and Aaron (sws) that of a prophet. Here both are called messengers because it is like addressing the dominant element (*'alā sabīl al-taghlīb*).

The words "so let the Israelites go with us" have been elucidated under verses 104-105 of Sūrah al-A'rāf.[40] There it has been explained where Moses (sws) wanted to take the Israelites. This also refutes the view of people who think that Moses (sws)

37. They said: "Our Lord! We fear that he will be cruel to us or his rebelliousness may increase even further."

38. God said: "Fear not! I am with you hearing and seeing everything."

39. "So, go to him and tell him: 'We both are messengers of your Lord; so let the Israelites go with us and do not put them through torment. We have also brought to you a big sign of your Lord. And peace is on them who follow the guidance.'"

40. See: *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 3, 416-418.

was a nationalist leader and his endeavours were more of a movement for freedom.

The word اٰيَة in قَدْ جِئْنٰكَ بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ means argument and reason regardless of number. In verse 105 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf, it is similarly said: قَدْ جَآءَتْكُم بَيِّنَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ (I have come to you with a clear argument from your Lord). The reason for giving Moses (sws) miracles in the very first phase has already been discussed earlier. The circumstances in which he showed the Pharaoh these miracles forthwith has also been explained.

The words “And peace is on them who follow the guidance” depict the sincerity and sympathy which is a hallmark of the preaching of prophets and which has been instructed to be adopted in verse 44 earlier. At the same time, they also constitute a very subtle warning too. The implication is that uptil then whatever the Pharaoh did belonged to the past but now that guidance has come to them through God’s messengers, the way to peace is to adopt the straight path or else get ready to face the consequences.

اِنَّا قَدْ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيْنَآ اَنَّ الْعَذَابَ عَلٰى مَنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلّٰى ﴿٤٨﴾[41]

This verse explains the previous one.

A reflection on it reveals many subtle points:

Firstly, Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) did not forcefully impose any punishment from themselves on the Pharaoh the way common leaders do. They only informed him of the divine revelation they had received from God that those who reject and turn away are visited by God’s torment. Obviously, they adopted this method not to give the Pharaoh any pretext of anger from their own selves.

Secondly, they did not address the Pharaoh and say that if he denied and turned away, then he would be struck by a torment. On the contrary, they used general words and said that he who did that would meet a certain fate. They adopted this style so that what was meant to be communicated to the Pharaoh reached his ears and his ego was also not hurt.

Thirdly, the objects of both verbs كَذَّبَ and تَوَلّٰى are suppressed. It was not said that those who rejected their prophethood and turned away from the guidance brought by them would be visited by a torment. This is because all this was understood and by expressing it would have again been a blow to his ego.

قَالَ فَمَنْ رَّبُّكُمَا يٰمُوْسٰى ﴿٤٩﴾[42]

Concomitant indications show that what transpired after the previous directive is suppressed before this verse. Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) took the message they

41. ‘It has been revealed to us that there is however torment for those who deny and turn away.’”

42. The Pharaoh asked: “Who is the Lord of both of you, O Moses?!”

were supposed to deliver to the Pharaoh and also communicated it to him. After this, the Pharaoh responded with the query mentioned in this verse. His implication was that since he himself was the Lord, then whose messengers were they? I have already explained in Sūrah al-A'rāf that the Pharaoh was considered as the God-King in Egypt. He was regarded as the avatar of the sun who was considered as their greatest deity. On this basis, his idols and statues were worshipped all over Egypt.

This question posed by the Pharaoh was sarcastic in nature. He cannot be unaware of the fact that in spite of claiming to be God, the Israelites in spite of being his slaves did not regard him to be so. However, until then, the status of the God of the Israelites was that of a dead God whose name was probably pronounced in their homes but He had no relationship with their practical affairs. Such affairs were controlled by the Pharaoh as their God. It was for the first time that both these prophets presented God as a living being before the Pharaoh. Not only did they present him in this manner, but also put forth some important requirements before him on God's behalf and that too with an element of warning. Obviously, the Pharaoh was not aware of this living God of the Israelites. Hence he found this warning to be rather strange and hence he disparagingly asked the question cited in the verse. This is also evident from its parallel mention in the Torah:

> Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go." (Exodus, 5:2)

قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِیۡۤ اَعۡطٰی کُلَّ شَیۡءٍ خَلۡقَہٗ ثُمَّ ہَدٰی ﴿۵۰﴾[43]

The detail found in the brevity of this verse is that everything has a specific form and structure with regard to its purpose of existence and also possesses guidance from its instincts to fulfil this purpose. To fulfil the purpose for which a honey bee has been created, the Almighty has placed all the necessary abilities and powers in its tiny form. Moreover, He also guided its instinct regarding the usage of these abilities and gather honey for itself. Same is the case with the smallest and the biggest object of this universe. An ant, an insect, a spider, a goat, a lion all have been given a specific physical form by God as well as guidance to their instincts in accordance with their needs. All of them have been guided by God regarding the nature of their sustenance and the way to obtain it, the way they should procreate, the manner in which they should protect their species, the elements they should protect themselves from, the things they should adopt and the role they should play in collectively serving this universe.

Who has inspired the nightingale to chant, the parrots to sing and the cuckoo to

43. He replied: "Our Lord is one who has given everything its physical shape; then gave guidance."

chirp? Obviously, their creator. So that creator is their Lord and of everyone.

The blessings of God are not merely confined to living beings. The way the plants and flowers of the orchards blossom forth, the manner in which violets, irises, roses, cypress and pine trees bloom, the amazing sight of apples, pomegranates and grapes – who has given them such form and shape? Who can claim to have created even one of these things or say that he has given the apple its distinctive taste and acacia trees their distinctive features. Who creates individual colours and odours, separate boons and benefits of every plant of an orchard, every type of grass of a piece of land and every bush of a forest? Whoever has, is surely the Lord and not every idiot who wears a crown and claims to have a share in the sovereignty of God.

Not only the earth, we can take a look at the sky. Who has created the sun, the moon, the galaxies, the rainbows, the sky, the clouds and the air and who has guided them to discharge their duties? It is the Lord surely. It is easy to become an avatar of the sun but who can make the sun appear a minute before its scheduled time or to disappear a minute after its appointed time?

Human beings are the best of God's creation on this earth. They have been given the best form and also been blessed with very great abilities. Yet neither has anyone a share in a person's creation nor the abilities he has. It is God Who has blessed him with hands, feet, nose, ears and eyes as well as instinct, intellect and cognizance. It is because of these abilities that it is easy for him to equally access the land, sea and mountains. People sail across the sea and fly overhead. Not only can they access the farthest areas and nooks and corners of the earth but also the moon and planets like Mars. Human beings control electricity and harness the atom. In spite of all this, they should not be in the slightest doubt that all this is a product of their own potential and ability. A person who is under this misconception is a fool. All these marvels are the result of God-given intellect. It is as a result of this that human beings have been able to discover some physical laws and land on the moon and Mars. If they are able to discover some laws because of the intellect given to them by God and are able to reach new heights as a result, they should not become so arrogant as to challenge God and His kingdom.

The answer given by Moses (sws) was very precise and brief but it contained great details. Though the words were very soft, his answer cornered the Pharaoh. In very comprehensive words, Moses (sws) explained to him that only that being can claim to be his God who created and guided, neither of which was done by him. Then how has he become the Lord? In verses 1-3 of Sūrah al-A'lā', this fact is stated thus: وَالَّذِیْ قَدَّرَ سَبِّحِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْاَعْلَى الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ فَسَوّٰى فَهَدٰى (Glorify the name of your Lord! The Most High, Who made a sketch and then perfected it, and Who imparted potentials and then gave guidance).

In reality, the human intellect and nature are sufficient to conclusively convey the truth to human beings. Thus in verses 14-15 of Sūrah al-Qiyāmah, it is stated: وَّلَوْ اَلْقٰى مَعَاذِیْرَهٗ بَلِ الْاِنْسَانُ عَلٰى نَفْسِهٖ بَصِیْرَةٌ

(in fact, he himself is a witness upon his own self however much he may put up excuses).

It is God's further blessing that He has also sent His messengers and books to guide mankind.

قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ الْقُرُوْنِ الْاُوْلٰى ﴿۵۱﴾[44]

This question by the Pharaoh is replete with sarcasm. The implication is that if Moses (sws) has come from his lord, he must be aware of the circumstances of the previous nations and hence can narrate them to him. It should be kept in mind that megalomaniacs and arrogant individuals try to do away with the impact of serious facts by raising such irrelevant questions and through this tactic try to maintain their own impact on their blind followers.

قَالَ عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّيْ فِيْ كِتٰبٍ ۚ لَا يَضِلُّ رَبِّيْ وَلَا يَنْسَى ﴿۵۲﴾[45]

Though the Pharaoh's answer was irrelevant and humiliating too, Moses (sws) not only gave a very solemn answer, he also seized the opportunity to deliver some wise words. The word كِتٰبٍ is undefined to magnify it. The implication is that no one should think that this register is an ordinary one; it contains every minute detail and when it is opened, everyone will cry out: مَالِ هٰذَا الْكِتٰبِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيْرَةً وَّلَا كَبِيْرَةً اِلَّآ اَحْصٰهَا (strange is this register; it has not left out any small or big thing from persevering it, 18:49).

The second part of the verse implies that the Almighty neither makes a mistake nor forgets. It is not possible that anything does not come into His knowledge or does so in a distorted form or gets erased. Moses (sws) could have answered the Pharaoh by showing his displeasure on the irrelevant question. He could have said that he was God's messenger and had never claimed to have past knowledge. However, instead of replying in this manner, he very eloquently said that though he himself does not have the knowledge of everything, His Lord has accurate information of everything. No one should be under the misconception that there is no record of nations which have vanished from the face of the earth: each and every detail is fully preserved in God's register. This preservation is not for the sake of it; the purpose is to subject them to accountability and to subsequent reward and punishment. Because all this was evident, Moses (sws) did not express it. However, his style very effectively conveys them. At times, insinuations are much more expressive than explicit mention.

الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَّسَلَكَ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا سُبُلًا وَّاَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۭ فَاَخْرَجْنَا بِهٖٓ اَزْوَاجًا مِّنْ نَّبَاتٍ شَتّٰى ﴿۵۳﴾

44. The Pharaoh said: "Then what is the situation of the previous nations?"

45. Moses replied: "Their knowledge is with my Lord in a register. My Lord neither errs nor forgets."

كُلُوْا وَارْعَوْا اَنْعَامَكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّاُولِي النُّهٰى ﴿٥٤﴾ مِنْهَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ وَفِيْهَا نُعِيْدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً اُخْرٰى ﴿٥٥﴾ وَ لَقَدْ اَرَيْنٰهُ اٰيٰتِنَا كُلَّهَا فَكَذَّبَ وَاَبٰى ﴿٥٦﴾[46]

Concomitant indications show that these four verses are not part of the speech of Moses (sws). They are directly by God. Several examples of such insertions can be seen in the earlier *sūrahs*. The benefit of this is that what is said is not merely a narration of the past, it is also made to have a bearing on the present. Moses (sws) had only responded to the Pharaoh. However, God added His own words to his speech in order to inform the pharaohs of the Quraysh that what has been said also related to them. They should hear out who their Lord is and who is actually worthy of their worship and obedience.

Thus the first two verses say that only the being responsible for all these phenomena deserves their compliance. It is stated that there are many arguments in them for men of understanding. Here these arguments are not explained but the proofs of God's providence, wisdom, power and mercy they contain cannot be hidden for those who use their intellect. This whole system of providence also bears witness to monotheism and to a day of reward and punishment. These arguments have been explained at many instances earlier also and will also be found at succeeding instances. Here the sole purpose is to direct attention to the fact that only that being is worthy of being regarded as Lord who has made all these arrangements of sustenance. When none has any role in these arrangements, how can anyone else be regarded as Lord.

Consider next the words: مِنْهَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ وَفِيْهَا نُعِيْدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً اُخْرٰى. Here the Day of Judgement is adduced from God's providence. The implication is that it is a necessary consequence of this providence that a day come in which the justice of the Lord of this universe manifests itself: those who fulfilled their obligations towards His favours be rewarded and those who made these favours a means of spreading disorder in the land be punished. It is stated that creating mankind a second time is not the slightest difficult for God: when He has created it from this earth without any bother, why would he have difficulty in recreating the dead when they are being returned to the earth.

Consider now the last verse: وَلَقَدْ اَرَيْنٰهُ اٰيٰتِنَا كُلَّهَا فَكَذَّبَ وَاَبٰى. The implication is that God showed the Pharaoh signs of all sorts, but he persisted in denying His messengers and continued to deny divine guidance. Here the signs referred to are all those that manifested themselves in Egypt one after the other once Moses (sws) had presented his message to the Pharaoh in order to warn him. However, the Pharaoh persisted in his denial until the very end. Details of these signs are found in the Torah and I have

46. – He Who has made the earth a cradle for you and made in it pathways for you and sent down water from the heavens; thus from it We produced various types of diverse plants. Eat and graze your cattle. There are signs in this for those who have intellect. From it We have created you, to it We shall return you and from it bring you out again. And We showed him all Our signs. In spite of this, he denied and rejected.

referred to them in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-A‘rāf under verse 33.

Deliberation on the afore-mentioned verses show that all of them are in the first person and hence they are not part of Moses’ conversation: they are from God.

قَالَ اَجِئْتَنَا لِتُخْرِجَنَا مِنْ اَرْضِنَا بِسِحْرِكَ يٰمُوْسٰى ﴿۵۷﴾[47]

It has been explained in detail in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-A‘rāf that in those times the greatest danger envisaged by the Pharaoh and his courtiers was the continuous increase in number of the Israelites. They feared that once they get strong, they could be manipulated by external enemies of the Pharaoh and one day expel him and his nation from the land. It was to circumvent this danger that the whole scheme of killing the male offspring of the Israelites was hatched. Yet this scheme ended up in failure. The Israelites continued to increase. However, until then they did not have any leader who could galvanize them into a single unit. Even before going to Madyan, as indicated earlier, the Pharaoh sensed this danger from Moses (sws) since he was involved in awakening the Israelites from slumber. He would actively defend and support the oppressed Israelites. Thus in order to stop him from this “criminal activity,” he was debarred from entering the city. Ultimately he had to go to Madyan after the accidental killing of a Copt. Now, when he returned and presented some important demands before the Pharaoh in such a grand and majestic way, he understood that the danger he had sensed had now actually manifested itself before him. Thus he uttered the words referred to by the verse under discussion. The Pharaoh was a very astute politician. He firstly painted the call of Moses (sws) as a political danger in order to incite his nation. Secondly, he regarded his miracles to be of the category of magic to do away with their impact on the minds of the common man.

فَلَنَاْتِيَنَّكَ بِسِحْرٍ مِّثْلِهٖ فَاجْعَلْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّا نُخْلِفُهٗ نَحْنُ وَلَآ اَنْتَ مَكَانًا سُوًى ﴿۵۸﴾[48]

The word مَوْعِد occurs both as a locus of time and as a locus of space. It can have both these connotations in this verse. But in the later verse, it is occurs as a locus of time. Examples of such loci can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*.

The word مَكَانًا سُوًى means “the middle.” The expression would mean a place that is at an equal distance from both and easily accessible to them. The scheme of the Pharaoh was that the contest take place in an open field in front of the public. His objective was to defeat Moses (sws) before everyone and in this way rout him in the very first phase so that he does not dare challenge him again.

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47. He said: “Moses! Have you come to us to turn us out from our land by a spell of your magic?

48. Then we too shall bring a similar magic against you. So, appoint a specific location between us and yourself, some place in the middle. Neither should we breach it nor should you.”

قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمُ الزِّيْنَةِ وَاَنْ يُّحْشَرَ النَّاسُ ضُحًى ﴿۵۹﴾ [49]

Since Moses (sws) was fully sure of his success, he accepted the challenge without any inhibition. It was on two or three occasions that public festivities and carnivals took place in Egypt. One of them was approaching. This carnival was nominated for the contest. The time just before midday is considered to be the most appropriate for any public gathering.

In other words, Moses (sws) too wanted to vanquish the ploy of the Pharaoh in this very contest.

فَتَوَلّٰى فِرْعَوْنُ فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهٗ ثُمَّ اَتٰى ﴿۶۰﴾ [50]

Other instances in the Qur'ān present more details regarding the measures adopted by the Pharaoh, while here the style adopted is that of brevity. The Pharaoh consulted his courtiers. They opined that employing ordinary magicians for this contest may result in defeat. Thus it is best if the most adept of magicians are gathered from various parts of the country and they take part in this contest. Later, this suggestion was followed.

قَالَ لَهُمْ مُّوْسٰى وَيْلَكُمْ لَا تَفْتَرُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا فَيُسْحِتَكُمْ بِعَذَابٍ ۚ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنِ افْتَرٰى ﴿۶۱﴾ [51]

The real meaning of سحت is to peel off meat from a bone. From this is the word اسحات which means to exploit or uproot something.

This is the speech which Moses (sws) delivered foremost in the arena of contest in front of the gathering.

The expression اِفْتِرَاء عَلَى اللّٰهِ refers to polytheism as has been explained at several instances. The reason that it is signified by these words has been referred to in detail in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Mā'idah and Sūrah al-An'ām. It has been pointed out in the previous verses that the real debate with the Pharaoh was that he claimed to be God. Moses (sws) refuted this baseless claim right in front of him. He rebutted him by saying the real Lord is the One Who has created this universe and is sustaining it and not the Pharaoh who has no role in these tasks. Now this same statement is repeated by Moses (sws) while addressing the supporters of the Pharaoh: none is God's partner; the partners they ascribe to him are their own fabrications because God has not

49. He said: "For you the promised day is the day of festivity and that people should be made to gather before midday."

50. Thus the Pharaoh withdrew from there and gathered all his manoeuvres, then came for combat.

51. Moses said: "Be forsaken! Do not impute falsehood to God so that He may crush you through some calamity. And he who imputes falsehood to God shall not succeed."

revealed any proof in their favour. Thus this is a falsehood they ascribe to God which has made them worthy of his punishment. They will be destroyed by it because this is the fate of such wrongdoers.

فَتَنَازَعُوْٓا اَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ وَاَسَرُّوا النَّجْوٰى ﴿٦٢﴾[52]

The idioms تنازع فی الحدیث and تنازع الامر mean to mutually exchange views. The verse states that once all the elders and nobles as well as the magicians had gathered, they held a clandestine meeting. It is evident from the succeeding verses that in this meeting the Pharaoh secretively tried to convince the magicians that both Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) were expert in magic as well. He told them that their objective was to organize their people through magic and sorcery and expel the Pharaoh and his people from the land and wipe out their culture and the advancements they have made: thus they must not be negligent at this instance; they should united face this danger and remember that he who wins in the contest at hand will in fact be the real victor.

قَالُوْٓا اِنْ هٰذٰنِ لَسٰحِرٰنِ يُرِيْدٰنِ اَنْ يُّخْرِجٰكُمْ مِّنْ اَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهِمَا وَيَذْهَبَا بِطَرِيْقَتِكُمُ الْمُثْلٰى ﴿٦٣﴾[53]

The اِنْ here is a shortened form of اِنَّ as is evidenced by لَ on لَسٰحِرٰنِ . The word مُثْلٰى is the feminine of امثل. It means "superior and fine."

The verse actually refers to what the Pharaoh and his chiefs said to the magicians in order to incite them against Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws).

The first thing they said was that both of them were expert magicians. This was meant to instigate professional jealousy. In other words, they have the same expertise and if the court magicians show any slackness, they will be disgraced.

The second thing they said was that both of them wanted to strike awe in their hearts and expel them from their land by galvanizing the Israelites.

The third thing they stated was that the splendour of their society and the advancements they have made through hard work was in great danger. If these two succeeded in their aims, this development would be ruined.

A reflection on these statements shows that those in authority always use such machinations against the bearers of truth as were used by the Pharaoh and his courtiers against Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws).

It may also be kept in mind that the words "your country" and "your exemplary system" have little truth in them. The Pharaoh and his rule signified an aristocracy in which all the rest were virtually slaves and minorities. When those in authority want to use the masses for their interest, they fool them in this way.

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52. At this, they began mutually consulting and secretly advising one another.

53.They said: "Both of them are very adept magicians. They want to turn you out from your land through their magic and uproot this exemplary system of yours.

فَاَجۡمِعُوۡا كَيۡدَكُمۡ ثُمَّ ائۡتُوۡا صَفًّا ۚ وَقَدۡ اَفۡلَحَ الۡيَوۡمَ مَنِ اسۡتَعۡلٰى ﴿۶۴﴾[54]

This verse mentions the piece of advice which was given to the magicians after deliberation: since the situation is very precarious and the contest is against very adept magicians, they should unite and then take them on. The need for this advice must have arisen because just as there is mutual jealousy between parties and everyone gives preference to his own interest and benefit, there are rivalries between professional communities and each one vies for its own superiority. The Pharaoh and his nobles feared that if their magicians have such lack of unity, they will be defeated. Thus they opined that instead of individually displaying their skills, they should take part in the contest collectively.

The second part of the verse refers to the precarious and sensitive nature of that day: it is a decisive day; if they win, future success will be theirs; otherwise, it is very likely that all their fears about Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) will materialize.

قَالُوۡا يٰمُوۡسٰۤى اِمَّاۤ اَنۡ تُلۡقِىَ وَاِمَّاۤ اَنۡ نَّكُوۡنَ اَوَّلَ مَنۡ اَلۡقٰى ﴿۶۵﴾[55]

After the consultation mentioned earlier, the magicians and Moses (sws) with their respective supporters began the contest. The magicians in accordance with professional ethics offered Moses (sws) to go first. However, it is evident from the style of the sentence that it is they who wanted to begin the proceedings in order to fully grip the audience in their spell. In such contests, the first turn carries great significance. Thus it is the wish of every contestant that he be given the first chance so that he can mesmerize the audience and strike awe in the heart of his rival.

قَالَ بَلۡ اَلۡقُوۡا ۚ فَاِذَا حِبَالُهُمۡ وَعِصِيُّهُمۡ يُخَيَّلُ اِلَيۡهِ مِنۡ سِحۡرِهِمۡ اَنَّهَا تَسۡعٰى ﴿۶۶﴾[56]

Moses (sws) had full conviction at God's behest that he would be victorious. So, he gave his opponents the first chance to display their skills. They were already waiting for this opportunity. As soon as Moses (sws) offered them this chance, they threw down their ropes and sticks on the ground. Because of the magical spell weaved by them, these sticks appeared to Moses (sws) as if they were running about. Since the magicians already knew that he could turn his stick into a serpent through his magic, they tried to counter and corner him in exactly the same way. The addition they made to this was that they made the ropes too turn into crawling snakes. In their own view,

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54. So, bring together all your schemes; then come united against them and today only he shall succeed who dominates.

55. They said: "Moses! Either you put forth or it can be that we put forth first?"

56. He said: "In fact, you put forth." So, all of a sudden their ropes and their staffs, because of their magic, seemed to him as if they are sliding.

they reckoned that they would win the contest because Moses (sws) could only turn one stick into a snake while they had not only transformed all their sticks into snakes but their ropes too. However, as is evident from the words يُخَيَّلُ اِلَيْهِ they were not able to actually make this transformation. They could only cast an optical allusion onto the onlookers, as a result of which they begin to see what they wanted them to see. Magic does not change the physical state of a thing; it only deceives a person, and as soon as the reality comes to the fore, the truth is exposed.

فَاَوْجَسَ فِيْ نَفْسِهٖ خِيْفَةً مُّوْسٰى ﴿٦٧﴾[57]

It was but natural for fear to arise in Moses (sws) upon seeing the sticks and ropes turning into snakes because until that time he had not yet seen the miracle of his staff. He thought that the contest would nevertheless be a tough one. Even though because of God's promise he was fully satisfied that he would win but when a situation becomes more complex than expected fear does arise in the heart. Thus Moses (sws) too felt scared temporarily. Since the word خِيْفَةً is undefined, it shows that this fear was transient and little in extent.

قُلْنَا لَا تَخَفْ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْاَعْلٰى ﴿٦٨﴾[58]

In order to alleviate the fear of Moses (sws), immediate glad tidings were revealed, as stated in the verse: whatever the profound nature of their magic, he will remain dominant come what may.

وَاَلْقِ مَا فِيْ يَمِيْنِكَ تَلْقَفْ مَا صَنَعُوْا ؕ اِنَّمَا صَنَعُوْا كَيْدُ سٰحِرٍ ؕ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السّٰحِرُ حَيْثُ اَتٰى ﴿٦٩﴾[59]

At the same time, Moses (sws) was directed to place his staff on the ground: it will gobble up the trick played by the magicians; these tricks of magicians never succeed. The real objective was to state the fact that magic can never combat the truth. However, the style adopted was to make a principle statement: a magician never succeeds because this is a fact. Magic relates to deceiving the eye and playing with the imagination of the onlookers. It does not change the reality. Moreover, the people who take up this profession are mostly the lowly sections of the society: they can fool the masses for a few days with their tricks, they have no role in the development of a society; this can never happen. On the other hand, the miracles worked by prophets of God reflect glory and grandeur. Moreover, they emanate from personalities who stand

57. At this, Moses felt a little scared in his heart.

58. We said: "Fear not! Certainly, it is you who shall remain dominant."

59. "And that which is in your hands place it on the ground. Whatever they have fashioned, it will swallow it. This trick they have played is a mere trick of a magician and wherever a magician may go, he does not succeed."

at the pinnacle of mankind; even their enemies vouch for their high character; they have a message for their addressees whose veracity is even borne witness to by their rivals. When these people pass away, they signal the end of an era. Their preaching heralds the beginning of a new chapter of history and a new world is born. Has there ever been a magician who has even contributed even slightly in any sphere of life? Here it needs to be kept in mind what has been referred to earlier: the difference between magic and miracle as explained by our theologians is a useless exercise. Such immense dissimilarity cannot be gauged through logic. The decisive factor in this regard is those who see – only if they have eyes.

فَأُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ سُجَّدًا قَالُوٓا اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّ هٰرُوْنَ وَمُوْسٰى ﴿٧٠﴾[60]

In other words, in accordance with the Almighty's directive, Moses (sws) placed his staff on the ground and like a serpent it started to consume all snakes. When the magicians saw this, they were bewildered. If there is even a semblance of acknowledgement of the truth left in a magician, he knows the most the difference between magic and miracle. The court magicians exactly had this. In verse 73 ahead, it is stated that these magicians already had an inkling that what Moses (sws) would present is not magic. Thus they were hesitant as well to face him. However, they were pressurized into facing him by the representatives of the Pharaoh. Hence, they did come to encounter Moses (sws) but when they saw the miracle worked by him, their eyes were opened and they immediately fell down in prostration. Falling down in prostration in this way in those times signalled the acknowledgement of someone's mastery of a skill. However, the magicians did not merely do this, they want further and announced in the whole gathering that they have professed faith in the God of Moses (sws). One can imagine what would have happened with the Pharaoh and his courtiers after this acknowledgement and proclamation. Yet the Pharaoh was a very clever political leader. He immediately tried to turn the situation to his own advantage and in order to fool the masses, he made a fresh verbal attack depicted in the next verse.

قَالَ اٰمَنْتُمْ لَهٗ قَبْلَ اَنْ اٰذَنَ لَكُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَكَبِيْرُكُمُ الَّذِيْ عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ ۚ فَلَاُقَطِّعَنَّ اَيْدِيَكُمْ وَ اَرْجُلَكُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ وَّ لَاُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ فِيْ جُذُوْعِ النَّخْلِ ۫ وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ اَيُّنَآ اَشَدُّ عَذَابًا وَّ اَبْقٰى ﴿٧١﴾[61]

In reality, the defeat the magicians were being made to go through was very

60. So the magicians fell down in prostration. They cried out: "We profess faith in the Lord of Moses and Aaron."

61. The Pharaoh said: "You attested to him without my permission? Indeed, he is your mentor who has taught magic to you. So, I shall have your hands and feet severed from opposite directions and crucify you on trunks of palm trees and you shall come to know whose punishment among us is more stern and more lasting."

humiliating. However, the scheming mind of the Pharaoh came up with the words referred to in the verse in order to assure his supporters.

It is evident that the magicians did not merely acknowledge Moses (sws) to be a truthful person but also explicitly announced their professing faith in the Lord of Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws). Concealed in this declaration was an obvious rejection of the Pharaoh as god. This had a direct impact on his divinity and sovereignty as a king. Thus this issue was not merely a religious one in his eyes; it was indirectly a challenge to his political authority. How could he have tolerated this audacity in his rule?

So he cleverly rebutted the magicians by saying that in reality Moses (sws) is their mentor. He has taught them the skill of magic. In other words, all this happened with their connivance with him. His implication was that they had already mutually agreed that they will openly accept defeat in front of their mentor so that the masses are over-awed by him; ultimately, they will succeed in all their conspiracies against the rule of the Pharaoh. In reality, all these were lame excuses: the Pharaoh had been defeated by an army he himself had constituted. In order to reduce the impact of his defeat he had to make up some excuse, and this he did. He must be praised for fabricating an intelligent pretext and it may well be that he may was successful in fooling many. However, the truth cannot be subdued with such deceptive measures.

As soon as the magicians were declared as criminals of conspiracy, the punishment declared for them was the same that as was reserved for insurgents: their limbs were to be severed from opposite sides and they were to be publicly crucified so that an example is made out of them for everyone. The words "crucify you on trunks of palm" are meant to refer to this public nature of the punishment.

Pharaoh's words "you shall come to know whose punishment among us is more stern and more lasting" imply that these magicians knew that if they did something against the will of their mentor he would punish them through their magic; thus they were pawns in the hands of Moses (sws); however, they would soon realize that the punishment given by the Pharaoh was more harsh and lasting. Here it needs to be kept in mind that in those days it was believed that if the disciple of a magician did something against his will and made him angry, then he could face a great calamity from his mentor. By keeping this notion in background, the Pharaoh warned the magicians of his own wrath.

قَالُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْثِرَكَ عَلٰى مَا جَآءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالَّذِيْ فَطَرَنَا فَاقْضِ مَآ اَنْتَ قَاضٍ ؕ اِنَّمَا تَقْضِيْ هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا ﴿۷۲﴾[62]

The warning sounded by the Pharaoh was very stern and he expected that he would be able to strike awe in the heart of the magicians: but now he was not facing professional magicians; in fact, righteous believers were in front of him. As soon as

62. They replied: "We shall certainly not give you preference over those clear signs that have come before us nor over the Being Who has created us. So, do what you want to. Whatever you can do relates to this worldly life."

they heard these threatening words from the Pharaoh, they told him to do what he wants. This is in fact the consequence of deep faith. At another instance in the Qur'ān, it is mentioned that it was these very magicians who had earnestly requested the Pharaoh to give them a prize if they succeeded. Now faith had lit up their inner-self in such a way that except for God and the hereafter nothing had any importance in their sight. So much so, they were even prepared to sacrifice their life in order to protect their faith.

اِنَّآ اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّنَا لِيَغْفِرَ لَنَا خَطٰيٰنَا وَمَآ اَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ وَّاَبْقٰى ۝[63]

It is clearly evident from the words "the magic to which you have compelled us" that these magicians were not prepared to enter into a contest with Moses (sws). They knew that whatever Moses (sws) was presenting was not magic; it was something else. However, they had to come as a result of the pressure exerted on them by the Pharaoh and his chiefs. Ultimately, the truth was made evident to them in such a manner that their hearts opened up to acknowledge and proclaim it.

The words "and God alone is better and eternal" are an answer to the Pharaoh's assertion cited earlier. This rejoinder reflects reality and is very profound too. The implication of their reply was that the Pharaoh was trying to scare them of his harsh and abiding punishment; on the other hand, they have left everything in order to adhere to their Lord – Who is better from everything of this world and everlasting too.

اِنَّهٗ مَنْ يَّاْتِ رَبَّهٗ مُجْرِمًا فَاِنَّ لَهٗ جَهَنَّمَ ۭ لَا يَمُوْتُ فِيْهَا وَلَا يَحْيٰى ۝[64]

This verse and the two succeeding ones are from God. A similar insertion was seen earlier in verses 53-59. There the Almighty had added His words to the speech of Moses (sws) so that the whole discourse could be related to the circumstances of the time of the Qur'ān' revelation.

The reason that I regard the verse under discussion and the two succeeding ones to be directly from God is that the way reward and punishment and the circumstances of the hereafter are mentioned only befits His majesty. Their style is very different from the previous verses. The word "wrongdoer" in the translation refers to a person who is disobedient to God and did not have the courtesy to repent. The words "he shall neither die nor live in it" refer to the extent and to the abiding nature of the punishment in such a profound way that it is difficult to explain them in words. Death can alleviate the greatest of punishments. However, where can a person go from a place death does not exist and its pangs attack from all sides.

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63. We professed faith in our Lord so that He may forgive our sins and also forgive the magic to which you have compelled us. And God alone is better and eternal."

64. Indeed, whoever comes before his Lord as a wrongdoer, for him is Hell. He shall neither die nor live in it.

وَمَنْ يَّاْتِهٖ مُؤْمِنًا قَدْ عَمِلَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ الدَّرَجٰتُ الْعُلٰى ﴿٧٥﴾[65]

This in contrast is a mention of the group that will succeed.

It is evident from the style of the verse that the only faith which has weight in the sight of God is one which is accompanied by righteous deeds. Faith that is without righteous deeds has no significance. It is like an infertile tree that does not have any branches or fruits. How can a tree which has not borne any fruit in this world do so in the next world?

جَنّٰتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ وَذٰلِكَ جَزٰٓؤُا مَنْ تَزَكّٰى ﴿٧٦﴾[66]

This is an explanation of the high reward these people will acquire. It is evident from this verse that this reward is not the result of false desires. Only they will be eligible to it who will try to purify themselves from all types of filth whether ideological, practical or moral. The Almighty has also guided people in this Book of the pitfalls one can encounter in this cause and also informed them in it of the concessions they will obtain because of human weaknesses. Rejection of any of these things will lead to extremism in religion. However, this too must be kept in mind that those who out of their own desire have reduced the importance of deeds, whether they belong or our classical theologians or those of modern times have indeed made it easy for us to enter Paradise; yet the Qur'ān does not entertain this view in any way. The key to Paradise is nevertheless in the hands of God and He has not handed it over to the theologians. Therefore, the only way to a secure future is to protect our selves from such false desires. The Qur'ān has called them as false wishes which were harboured by the Jews and their details can be found in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

وَلَقَدْ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى مُوْسٰٓى ۙ اَنْ اَسْرِ بِعِبَادِيْ فَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ طَرِيْقًا فِي الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا ۙ لَّا تَخٰفُ دَرَكًا وَّلَا تَخْشٰى ﴿٧٧﴾[67]

The idiom ضرب الطریق means " to make way" as has been explained by al-Zamakhsharī.[68] However, here there is also a subtle reference in this expression to the staff of Moses (sws) because it had a role in "making way." The collocation of the verb ضرب with عصاء is quite evident.

In the sentence لَّا تَخٰفُ دَرَكًا وَّ لَا تَخْشٰى the object of the verb تَخْشٰى is suppressed in my

65. And those go before Him as believers who would have done righteous deeds also, then it is such people for whom there are high ranks.

66. For them, will be orchards of eternal residence beneath which streams flow. They shall live in them forever. And this is the reward of those who adopt purity.

67. And We revealed to Moses: "Set off with My servants at night. Then make a dry path for them in the sea. Neither will you be in danger of being pursued nor have any fear of drowning."

68. Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 3, 78.

opinion as a result of parallel construction. Thus the actual sentence would be to the effect: لَّا تَخَافُ دَرَكًا وَّ لَا تَخْشٰى غَرَقًا; the implication being that Moses (sws) will neither have any fear of being captured by the Pharaoh nor any danger of drowning in the sea. Numerous examples of such suppressions can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*. I have translated this sentence accordingly.

A large part of what transpired between Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh has been suppressed here. It has been discussed in detail in the explanation of Sūrah al-A'rāf. Moses (sws) had demanded from the Pharaoh to let the Israelites go with him; not only did the latter reject this demand, he increased the wave of oppression let loose on them. During this time the Almighty sent down many calamities one after the other on Egypt to awaken the Pharaoh from his slumber. However, whenever a calamity descended, he would sweet-talk Moses (sws) to pray to ward off this calamity, in which case he would allow the Israelites to go with him. Then once that calamity would be warded off because of Moses' (sws) supplication and God's mercy, his rebelliousness would increase and he would go back on his promise. Many years passed in this situation. During this time, Moses (sws) also fully discharged his responsibility of delivering the message of God to the Pharaoh and his nation. Ultimately when the truth had been fully delivered to them, Moses (sws) was directed by God to migrate to Egypt with the Israelites.

Until then, as has been explained in Sūrah al-A'rāf, Moses' (sws) demand was that the Israelites be allowed to go to him to a desert situated at a distance of three days.[69] However, since now he had also conclusively communicated the truth to the Pharaoh and the Israelites, he was directed to migrate to this land in accordance with the established practice of God. The words of the directive "take My servants" refer to those who had accepted faith. A vast majority of them belonged to the Israelites; however, a small group among them also consisted of the Egyptians who had professed faith. Concomitant indications show that the magicians who had accepted faith belonged to the Egyptians and to the Israelites. The word "My servants" refers to all who had accepted faith regardless of their lineage and tribe. In this regard, the Qur'ān has also mentioned a righteous believer who belonged to the Pharaoh's family.

The الْبَحْرَ referred to here is the southern gulf of the Red Sea. Moses (sws) was directed to reach its shores with all the Israelites and strike the sea water with his staff, thereby creating a dry path for them. This style also indicates the authority with which he was blessed from God that manifested itself in the form of a miracle,. By waving the staff, this dry path would be created. The *alif lām* on الْبَحْرَ is a clear evidence where God had instructed Moses (sws) to go. Following are the details of this incident as mentioned in the Torah so that it becomes evident how the glory of God manifested itself at this instance. It is written in the Book of Exodus:

69. In the opinion of my mentor, Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, he wanted to take them to Makkah to carry out the rituals of animal sacrifice.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground … Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued them. (14:15-29)

It is evident from this that this miracle was the result of a strong eastern wind. The gulf was divided into chunks of water separated by dry land.

فَاَتْبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ بِجُنُوْدِهٖ فَغَشِيَهُمْ مِّنَ الْيَمِّ مَا غَشِيَهُمْ ﴿۷۸﴾[70]

The style found in the expression فَغَشِيَهُمْ مِّنَ الْيَمِّ مَا غَشِيَهُمْ is adopted in Arabic when the horrific nature of something is beyond expression.

It is evident from the Torah that the Pharaoh was totally cornered by the miracles shown to him. He ultimately allowed the Israelites to go with Moses (sws). However, once they departed, his opinion changed and he went in their pursuit and reached the shores of the sea with his army. Thereafter he was engulfed by its huge waves. In the book of Exodus, this incident is recorded in the following words:

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, "What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!" So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. (14:5-7)

After that, the details of their drowning are described thus:

… Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived. But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. (14:26-29)

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70. So, the Pharaoh followed him with his armies. Ultimately, they were covered by the sea with that which covered them.

وَاَضَلَّ فِرْعَوْنُ قَوْمَهٗ وَمَا هَدٰى ﴿۷۹﴾[71]

This verse expresses sorrow and regret on the Pharaoh and his leadership's lack of acumen that led them all to devastation. The words وَمَا هَدٰى refer to the fact that it is the responsibility of every leader and ruler to correctly guide their nation. His status is that of a shepherd that God has deputed for the protection of a herd from among his creation. Most wretched is the shepherd who sacrifices his herd for his egotism.

يٰبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ قَدْ اَنْجَيْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ عَدُوِّكُمْ وَوٰعَدْنٰكُمْ جَانِبَ الطُّوْرِ الْاَيْمَنَ وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوٰى ﴿۸۰﴾ كُلُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا فِيْهِ فَيَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبِيْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّحْلِلْ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِيْ فَقَدْ هَوٰى ﴿۸۱﴾ وَاِنِّيْ لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَنْ تَابَ وَاٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدٰى ﴿۸۲﴾[72]

After making them cross the sea, the Almighty has reminded the Israelites of His great favours so that they can recall the great responsibility imposed on them as an obligation to these favours. At the same time, they are also informed of the fate that is destined for those who do not value favours and instead of being grateful end up as ingrates and rebellious ones. Precisely in this context with a slight change in words, this topic is brought up in Sūrah al-Baqarah. There I have explained every aspect of it in detail. Hence here I will content myself to hints only. Those who want to read these details can look up what has been written under verses 46-57 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

The promise referred to in the words وَوٰعَدْنٰكُمْ جَانِبَ الطُّوْرِ الْاَيْمَنَ is the one which the Almighty made with the Israelites through Moses of giving them the Torah. For this purpose, he had called them to this blessed side of the mount Ṭūr. It is here that Moses (sws) was made a messenger while he was returning from Madyan. Details of the way the Israelites behaved with this favour are discussed ahead.

The words الْمَنَّ and السَّلْوٰى have been explained under verse 57 of Sūrah al-Baqarah together with how the Israelites treated these favours.

The words "eat of the pure things given by Us and do not be rebellious after receiving this favour" mention the obligation they owe to these favours. The Israelites were reminded of these favours by their very existence and also through prophets of God. The Torah contains references to these. The last part cautions them that this abundance of favours should not make them arrogant and rebellious; these traits are the hallmark of the Pharaoh whose fate they have just witnessed. It is further stated

71. And the Pharaoh led astray his nation; he did not show it the right path.

72. O Israelites! We delivered you from your enemy and promised you a time at the blessed side of Ṭūr and sent down upon you *mann* and *salwā*: "Eat of the pure things given by Us and do not be rebellious after receiving this favour lest My wrath descends on you and he on whom My wrath descends will be ruined. And for those who repent, accept faith and do good deeds, then adhere to guidance, for them I am very Forgiving."

that such rebelliousness invites God's wrath and he who becomes its target is destroyed: from a state of honour he descends into humiliation. They have seen with their very eyes the fate of the one who claimed to be god.

The last verse mentions the path of deliverance for those have the determination to follow these directives.

وَمَآ اَعْجَلَكَ عَنْ قَوْمِكَ يٰمُوْسٰى ﴿٨٣﴾ قَالَ هُمْ اُولَآءِ عَلٰٓى اَثَرِىْ وَعَجِلْتُ اِلَيْكَ رَبِّ لِتَرْضٰى ﴿٨٤﴾[73]

The preposition عَنْ after اَعْجَلَكَ indicates a verb be considered to be present that collocates with the expression: اَعْجَلَكَ عَنْ. This style has been explained at a number of instances in the Qur'ān that in such cases a *taḍmīn* exists in which the suppressed verb collocates with the preposition. The translation keeps this aspect into consideration.

These verses relate to the instance when the Almighty had asked Moses (sws) to come to the same place as when he was blessed with prophethood so that the Torah could now be give to him. God fixed a time period of thirty days for this. However, in his zeal to meet Him, Moses (sws) assigned Aaron (sws) to look after the nation and reached the place ascertained before time. The Torah mentions this but does not state any time period or the hastiness shown by him:

> The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commandments I have written for their instruction." Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide, and Moses went up on the mountain of God. He said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are with you, and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them." (Exodus, 24:12-14)

In Sūrah al-A'rāf, this is mentioned thus:

وَوٰعَدْنَا مُوْسٰى ثَلٰثِيْنَ لَيْلَةً وَّاَتْمَمْنٰهَا بِعَشْرٍ فَتَمَّ مِيْقَاتُ رَبِّهٖٓ اَرْبَعِيْنَ لَيْلَةً ۚ وَقَالَ مُوْسٰى لِاَخِيْهِ هٰرُوْنَ اخْلُفْنِىْ فِىْ قَوْمِىْ وَاَصْلِحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيْلَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ (٧: ١٤٢)

> And We took a promise of thirty nights from Moses and completed it with ten further nights; so, as a result of this, forty nights were completed as the time appointed by his Lord.[74] And Moses said to his brother Aaron: "After me, be in my place among my people and keep reforming them and do not tread the path of the mischief-mongers." (7:142)

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73. And what made you leave your people and come over early, O Moses? He replied: "These people are also right behind me and Lord! I have come early to earn your pleasure."

74. Initially, this promise was for thirty days. However, in his eagerness to meet the Almighty, Moses (sws) reached the place before the appointed time. Thus, in order to train and instruct him for showing haste, the Almighty increased the period from thirty days to forty.

This haste shown by Moses (sws), as is evident from his own words, was the result of his zeal and his passion to earn God's pleasure. Viewed thus, it had nothing wrong in it. In fact, it was the consequence of love for God. However, this haste became a source of great trial for him and his nation. Taking advantage of his absence, the miscreants among them led the nation to the trial of cow worship. In spite of his full effort, Aaron (sws) was not able to control this situation. Until then, the temperament of Moses' (sws) nation was of being swayed by emotions. It has been mentioned in Sūrah al-A'rāf that right after crossing the sea when they encountered idol-worshipping nations, they demanded from him to make an idol for them the way these nations had. This incident took place just before him going to the mount Ṭūr. He had also scolded these miscreants on this demand. He must have been well aware of them and must have also known how much Aaron (sws) would be able to control these mischief-mongers. In these circumstances, even a few days of his absence could have become a great trial. However, in his zeal and passion, he could not fully gauge the gravity of the situation. The consequence was very grave.

It has been explained at a number of instances that if prophets of God make mistakes, it is never because of any inclination to any base desire or sentiment; at times, however, in their desire for the truth and pleasing God they do exceed the prescribed limits. This attitude in itself is not something bad, yet since prophets of God are standards of the truth and all their words and deeds are examples for others, they are checked by Him for any excess. Thus Moses (sws) was also checked for his hastiness. In the introduction of this *sūrah*, it has been mentioned that Prophet Muḥammad (sws) was taught to show patience. For this reason, this incident from the life of Moses (sws) has been specially mentioned. The purpose is to tell Muḥammad (sws) that showing patience and waiting for God's decree is the right behaviour for such struggles in His cause; otherwise, at times, the most pious of intentions done with haste becomes a pitfall for many.

قَالَ فَاِنَّا قَدْ فَتَنَّا قَوْمَكَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِكَ وَاَضَلَّهُمُ السَّامِرِيُّ ﴿۸۵﴾ [75]

The words فَتَنَّا قَوْمَكَ refer to the established practice of God that I have explained in detail under فَتَنّٰكَ فُتُوْنًا in verse 40. Both individuals and nations constantly pass through various trials. Through these trials, the Almighty distinguishes the right from the wrong. Here the purpose is to say that God made Moses' (sws) nation pass through a test and it failed the test: Sāmirī led it astray.

Sāmirī is not mentioned in the Torah. Thus what is known about him is only that which is mentioned in the Qur'ān and what is stated ahead. The narrators of the Torah

75. God said: "Then We have put your nation through a trial behind you and Sāmirī has led it astray."

have ascribed all this mischief to Aaron (sws). It is a favour done by the Qur'ān that it has exposed the name of the actual originator of this mischief and absolved Aaron (sws) of this blame.

Whether Sāmirī belonged to the Israelites or to the Egyptians who had migrated with Moses (sws) is an irrelevant question that also has no benefit. I would not like to enter into this debate. What is evident from the Qur'ān is that he was a very cunning and mischievous person hypocritical in nature who entered among the followers of Moses (sws) with evil motives. It will be evident from subsequent verses that he was a clever mystic who had the skill of playing mind tricks. Such people can easily deceive simpletons. Taking advantage of Moses' (sws) absence, he tried to trick the masses. It is evident from details already mentioned that Moses (sws) had left before his scheduled time and then later God extended his term by ten days to train and instruct him. Thus Sāmirī was afforded with opportune time to play his tricks. He gathered all those elements from the Israelites who already had a proclivity for idol-worship. He told them that no one knows where Moses (sws) had gone to search for God, and if they give him some of their jewellery he would make a deity for them who would guide them; until when will they wait for Moses (sws) who has just disappeared?

Sāmirī was a also very adept idol-maker of Egypt. He made a calf from the jewellery given to him by the people. Such was its shape that when the wind would pass through it, a certain sound came out of it. He regarded this sound, as will become evident later, to be a consequence of his magic. He was thereby able to fool the masses. Aaron (sws) tried his best to protect people from the mischief created by him, but he was not successful in suppressing elements which had been over-awed by Moses (sws). Matters became so worse that Aaron's own life was subjected to danger and he felt that if he now takes any step, instead of any benefit, great harm will come about and the whole community would be dismembered. Thus, he thought it best to leave matters to Moses' return.

فَرَجَعَ مُوْسٰٓى اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ غَضْبَانَ اَسِفًا ۚ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَلَمْ يَعِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا ۚ اَفَطَالَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْعَهْدُ اَمْ اَرَدْتُّمْ اَنْ يَّحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَاَخْلَفْتُمْ مَّوْعِدِيْ ﴿٨٦﴾[76]

When Moses receive news of what had happened, he was overcome by emotions that arise on such occasions. He returned to his people in great anger and grief. He was annoyed at the miscreants of his nation who had succeeded in this prank and it is evident from later verses that he was also angry with Aaron (sws) because he did not have full knowledge of the incident; he reckoned that Aaron (sws) had not did enough

76. At this, Moses returned to his nation in great anger and grief and said: "People of My Nation! Had not your Lord made a very good promise with you? Has much time passed on you or did you want that your Lord's wrath descend on you; for this reason, you have broken My covenant?"

to protect the nation from the evil of these miscreants. His grief was at the wretchedness of his nation that while he had gone to fetch God's guidance for them, they started worshipping a calf.

The promise referred to in the verse is the one that has been referred to earlier: while going to mount Ṭūr, he had directed all the chiefs of his nation that they should stay at that place until he returns with *sharī'ah* for which he was going. He had told them to follow the directives of Aaron (sws) during this time.

قَالُوْا مَآ اَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلْكِنَا وَلٰكِنَّا حُمِّلْنَآ اَوْزَارًا مِّنْ زِيْنَةِ الْقَوْمِ فَقَذَفْنٰهَا فَكَذٰلِكَ اَلْقَى السَّامِرِيُّ ﴿٨٧﴾[77]

Because of the rather concise nature of this verse, our exegetes have faced difficulty in interpreting it. After stating its meaning in my own words, I will explain the its individual words.

First of all, Moses (sws), as alluded to earlier, scolded the nation elders who he had given the responsibility of looking after it in his absence. These elders expressed their helplessness and inability. They said that they did not have any role in whatever happened; people had entrusted their jewellery in their care; at their demand, they returned it back to them and in this way Sāmirī prepared a calf for them. Their implication was that he was responsible for this crime as well as those who were deceived by him. They were forced to consign the jewellery to him when its owners pressurized them.

The word مَلْك means "will and power." They meant that they tried their best to abide by the promise they made. However, circumstances were beyond their control.

The expression زِيْنَةِ الْقَوْمِ refers to the jewellery people had entrusted to the chiefs. It seems that in order to safeguard themselves from the uncertainties of travel, many people had entrusted their jewellery to the elders of the nation, which they accepted as a service to them. The Torah contains conflicting statements regarding the ownership of the jewellery – whether it belonged to the Israelites or to the Egyptians. It is evident from chapter 35 of the book of Exodus that it belonged to the Israelites; however, another narrative from this book shows that while leaving the country, the Israelites had borrowed it from the Egyptians. This second account appears to be illogical. In the first place, the Israelites never had this status that they could borrow jewellery from the Egyptians and the latter agree to this settlement especially when for years a very grave conflict existed between the two. Also the Egyptians thought that the Israelites were preparing to leave the country. Secondly, how could Moses (sws) morally and religiously tolerate the fact that he allow his people to own something they had actually borrowed? Thus this view is untenable. The correct view in this

77. They replied: "We did not break our promise with you out of our own will. In fact, we had been made to carry the burden of the nation's jewellery. We cast it off and in this way Sāmirī showed this trick."

regard is that the jewellery belonged to the Israelites. In verse 148 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf, the words used are مِنْ حُلِيِّهِمْ (from their jewellery), which corroborate this view.

The word قَذَفَ means to "to cast down or to throw up." The chiefs said that they had carried the burden of the people entrusted to them even though they did not like it. The purpose was to be of service to them; however, now that they have been pushed so far, they have cast down the burden. Those who have a flair for the Arabic language know that all the three words حُمِّلْنَآ, اَوْزَار and قَذَفْ allude to heaviness of the burden these chiefs felt. When Moses (sws) scolded them, they thought they since the calf had been made from jewellery, he must have thought that they too had a hand in it. In order to remove this doubt from his mind, they said these words to clarify their own position. Also evident from their word بِمَلْكِنَا is the fact they tried their best to save people from the mischief worked by Sāmirī. However, circumstances worsened beyond their control. Since their helplessness was evident, it seems that Moses (sws) accepted their excuse.

Consider next the expression: اَلْقَى السَّامِرِيُّ. The verb اَلْقٰى in Arabic has a wide connotation. Just as it means to place something on the ground, it also means to throw dice and show a trick or stunt. In Sūrah al-Ḥajj, this word will be extensively researched. Here it is in exactly the same meaning as in verse 65 of this *sūrah* اِمَّآ اَنْ تُلْقِيَ وَاِمَّآ اَنْ نَّكُوْنَ اَوَّلَ مَنْ اَلْقٰى (either you show your trick first or we show our skill).

The chiefs held Sāmirī to be entirely responsible for this mischief.

فَاَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَّهٗ خُوَارٌ فَقَالُوْا هٰذَآ اِلٰـهُكُمْ وَاِلٰهُ مُوْسٰى ۙ فَنَسِيَ ﴿۸۸﴾[78]

The word خُوَارٌ signifies the bellowing of the calf. In other words, Sāmirī made a model of the calf from which this sound came out. It seems that he was very adept in the Egyptian art of idol-making. In those times, this art was at its zenith in Egypt. Some relics of those times have been mentioned in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-A‘rāf. It was not difficult for anyone skilled with the craft of making idols in those times to extract such a calf from which a bellowing sound would come out. Sāmirī regarded this sound to be a consequence of his magic. In order to fool the masses, he led them to believe that he had thrown the dust created by the hooves of Gabriel's horse in this statue thereby creating this sound.

Even today people fool people by such mind tricks and there exist far greater magicians than Sāmirī in our cities. So how could it have been difficult for him to deceive a simple nation as the Israelites. Thus the miscreants who were the originators of this mischief stirred the propaganda that this calf is the real deity of the masses and of Moses (sws); however, the latter had just ignored it and disappeared in the wilderness of mount Ṭūr. The result of this propaganda was that a vast majority of the Israelites were caught in the quagmire of this mischief.

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78. So, he extracted a calf for them: a body from which the sound of a bull would come out. At this, they said: "Is this your god and that of Moses, but he has forgotten it."

اَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ اَلَّا يَرْجِعُ اِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلًا ۙ وَّلَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا نَفْعًا ﴿٨٩﴾[79]

The implication of this verse is that a deity is the greatest need of a person. What need will such a lame deity fulfil that has made them worship it?

وَلَقَدْ قَالَ لَهُمْ هٰرُوْنُ مِنْ قَبْلُ يٰقَوْمِ اِنَّمَا فُتِنْتُمْ بِهٖ ۚ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ الرَّحْمٰنُ فَاتَّبِعُوْنِيْ وَاَطِيْعُوْٓا اَمْرِيْ ﴿٩٠﴾[80]

In this verse, Aaron (sws) has expressed his acquittal from this mischief. As indicated earlier, in the Torah he has been regarded as its originator; however, the Qur'ān has vehemently negated it. It is also evident from the word "already" that as soon as this mischief surfaced, he started to warn people about it in the words mentioned in the verse.

قَالُوْا لَنْ نَّبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ عٰكِفِيْنَ حَتّٰى يَرْجِعَ اِلَيْنَا مُوْسٰى ﴿٩١﴾[81]

Aaron (sws) tried his best to warn people of it but they refused to listen to him. Their response depicted in the verse shows that in spite of this, though they were deceived by Satan and were guilty of great foolishness, later many of them did realize this folly, as is evident from Sūrah al-A'rāf. However, it is never easy to rectify a foolish act. Thus these people too instead of giving it up immediately adhered to calf-worship until the return of Moses (sws).

قَالَ يٰهٰرُوْنُ مَا مَنَعَكَ اِذْ رَاَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوْٓا ﴿٩٢﴾ اَلَّا تَتَّبِعَنِ ۭ اَفَعَصَيْتَ اَمْرِيْ ﴿٩٣﴾[82]

The directive referred to in the verse is the Moses (sws) had given to Aaron (sws) and the elders when he was departing for mount Ṭūr. I have also mentioned it under verse 123 of Sūrah al-A'rāf: he directed Aaron (sws) to mind the people in his place and remain aware of the miscreants in the nation and not let them spread mischief. The style in which Moses (sws) has posed this question is that he knew that Aaron (sws) would not deliberately disobey him; he actually wanted to find out his excuse.

Obviously, after اَلَّا تَتَّبِعَنِ apparently there is no need for لَا. Thus our grammarians regard it to be redundant. However, it is not redundant here but occurs to emphasize the verb in accordance with common linguistic principles of classical Arabic. This

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79. Would not these people reflect that neither can it respond to anything nor can it inflict any harm or give benefit?

80. And Aaron had already said to them: "O People of My Nation! You have been put through trial by it. Your Lord is the Most Merciful God. Hence you should follow me and listen to me."

81. They said: "We shall now keep worshipping this calf until Moses returns to us."

82. Moses said: "Aaron! When you saw them going astray, what stopped you from not following me? Have you disobeyed My directive?"

style is found in Urdu as well.

قَالَ يَبْنَؤُمَّ لَا تَأْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِي وَلَا بِرَأْسِي ۚ إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَن تَقُولَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي ﴿٩٤﴾[83]

The reaction of Moses (sws) depicted in this verse shows both his affiliation and sense of honour for the truth and his natural love for his brother. In fact, this love entailed that when he realized that Aaron (sws) was guilty of a weakness in the matter of religion, he be overwhelmed with emotions and fervently admonish him. The attitude of the prophets of God is that in worldly affairs they do show tolerance; however, in religious affairs, they do not compromise in any way. In this regard, the closer a person is to them, the more sensitive they are for him. People who are given to the pleasures of this world behave entirely differently: they are very cautious and clever in worldly affairs and even call their fathers and sons to account; however, in religious affairs, they do not have any sensitivity; whatever, their close ones do does not effect their sense of honour.

Aaron (sws) expressed his excuse in a very nice way. It has been explained in Sūrah al-A'rāf that he tried his best to stop people from this trial. However, a vast majority was led astray by the spell weaved by Sāmirī. Such was its extent that Aaron (sws) feared for his life if he persisted to correct them. Now only two options remained: either Aaron (sws) was to separate himself with his followers from others or wait for some days for Moses' (sws) return. The first option would have resulted in divisions among people and bloodshed. In the second option, it could have been expected that Moses (sws) would set right the affairs because of the awe and respect he commanded and because of his acumen. For this reason, Aaron (sws) did not adopt the first option because it would have created disorder rather than any improvement in the state of affairs and he wanted to save his nation from this disorder and bloodshed as much as possible. In the second option, there was a chance that Moses (sws) would be able to control the situation because of his acumen and forceful personality. For this reason, he abandoned the first option as it would create disorder. He obviously wanted this to not happen.

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يَا سَامِرِيُّ ﴿٩٥﴾[84]

After asking all those who could be responsible for the mischief, when it became evident to Moses (sws) that it was Sāmirī's handiwork, he posed the question alluded to in this verse.

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83. He replied: "O the one given birth to by my mother! Grasp not my beard nor my head. I feared that you would but say: 'You have created a rift among the Israelites and did not give regard to what I said.'"

84. Moses asked: "What is your matter, O Sāmirī?"

قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوْا بِهٖ فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ اَثَرِ الرَّسُوْلِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذٰلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِيْ نَفْسِيْ ﴿٩٦﴾[85]

When Sāmirī saw that he could not escape from the grasp of Moses (sws), he made up a clever excuse to absolve himself. In this excuse, on the one hand, he tried to justify his action and on the other confessed that whatever he did was a deception of his own inner-self and he was led to believe that it was actually the truth.

He said that he had a vision and saw something which others did not; he saw in his vision that Gabriel had come and that he (Sāmirī) had picked up a handful of dust and put it inside the model of a calf that he had made. As a result of this, it started to speak. He confessed that after Moses' statement, it became evident to him that he had been deceived by his inner-self and that it was not a vision that he had seen. As a result, he perpetrated this crime. In this way, he tried to convince Moses (sws) that it was a misconception and nothing intentional. However, he fully knew that it would not be easy for him to escape from the grasp of Moses (sws) and whatever bluff he was playing would not succeed before him. He thus confessed that whatever happened was because of a misconception: he regarded the deceptive prompting of his soul to be a vision and hence committed this crime.

قَالَ فَاذْهَبْ فَاِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ اَنْ تَقُوْلَ لَا مِسَاسَ ۖ وَاِنَّ لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّنْ تُخْلَفَهٗ ۚ وَانْظُرْ اِلٰٓى اِلٰهِكَ الَّذِيْ ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا ؕ لَنُحَرِّقَنَّهٗ ثُمَّ لَنَنْسِفَنَّهٗ فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا ﴿٩٧﴾[86]

This excuse was enough for Moses (sws) to understand Sāmirī's clever trick.

The word فَاذْهَبْ here means "to go and get lost."

The words فِي الْحَيٰوةِ imply that this punishment in which he would continuously be cursed was not a temporary one; he will have to endure it for the rest of his life.

The words اَنْ تَقُوْلَ لَا مِسَاسَ refer to the fact that Sāmirī will himself call out to people that he was impure and thus should not be touched nor could he himself touch anyone.

In the Mosaic *sharī'ah*, there exists a punishment to sever someone from the community. After stating certain prohibitions in chapter 7 of Leviticus, it is said about those who are guilty of them:

> When anyone touches anything unclean, whether human uncleanness, or an unclean animal, or any unclean detestable thing, and eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings which belong to the LORD, that person shall be cut off

85. He replied: "I saw that which others did not; so, I picked up a handful from the footprints of the messenger; then cast it into the calf. Thus did my soul prompt me."

86. Moses said: "Then be off with you. Now, for life, you will continue to say: 'No one should touch me,' and there is another promised time too for you which will never be deferred from you. And look at this deity to which you strongly had attached yourself. We shall burn it; then scatter it in the sea.'"

from his people.

A person who was administered this punishment would virtually become untouchable; he would neither be allowed to participate in any social gathering of grief or festivity nor allowed to enter worship places; also, no one would be allowed to make arrangements of his own burial. A punishment which is even more harsh than this has been prescribed for patients of leprosy. It is stated in the book of Leviticus:

> Anyone with such a defiling disease must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' As long as they have the disease they remain unclean. They must live alone; they must live outside the camp. (13:45-46)

Moses (sws) administered this same punishment to Sāmirī. The only difference is that for lepers this punishment remains as long as they are inflicted with this disease but for Sāmirī it was a life-long punishment since he was afflicted with the leprosy of hypocrisy. Moral leprosy is filthier than physical leprosy. Moreover, Moses (sws) gave him the punishment of cursing him which is the harshest punishment in religion. If the Qur'ānic words اَنۡ تَقُوۡلَ لَا مِسَاسَ are placed in parallel with the words of the Torah: "and cry out, 'unclean! unclean!'" only then the real emphasis of the Qur'ānic words can be understood. It should be kept in mind that declaring one's self to be unclean is the ultimate of extent of humiliation.

The last part of the verse shows portrays the fate of the calf. Moses (sws) mentioned it in this way because not only is it essential to wipe out polytheism, it is also essential to destroy all its manifestations so that all the viruses of this creed are totally uprooted.

At the time of the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet (sws) too had destroyed all the idols forthwith.

Here it is possible that a question arise in the minds of some people: why was Sāmirī not punished by death by Moses (sws) since many perpetrators of this crime were executed by him, as is mentioned in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Baqarah? The answer to this question in my opinion is that this curse is more harsh and exemplary a punishment than execution, as I have mentioned in the case of those who had violated he command about the *sabt*. When a person is executed, the punishment finishes the matter immediately and the lesson others people receive from it is also temporary. However, the curse-punishment sticks to a person both in this world and in the Hereafter. Imagine the extent of the wretchedness of a person who calls out from his own tongue that he is unclean and that no one should touch him. It should be kept in mind that the curse of a messenger is a punishment from which none can escape. Such a person will remain accursed wherever he goes – both in this world and in the next.

The Qur'ān has specified here that the statue of the calf was burnt and crushed to bits and its ashes were scattered in the sea. However, the account in the Torah says

that Moses (sws) dissolved the ashes in water and made the people drink it. This shows that the narrators of the Torah do not even have the knack of fabricating something. How could Moses (sws) have asked people to drink this "elixir of life"? If this account is regarded to be true, then perhaps it is the consequence of this drink that in spite of being recipients of a divine book, these people became prone to polytheism. Such is its effect that it has become a permanent feature of their lives.

اِنَّمَآ اِلٰـهُكُمُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَسِعَ كُلَّ شَیْءٍ عِلْمًا ﴿۹۸﴾[87]

The verse implies that those who regarded the calf to be their deity were doomed. People should remember that only God is the one they must worship. The words "His knowledge embraces everything" form an argument in favour of monotheism. When this is the case, why should anyone other than Him be made a deity? When He hears and knows everything, He alone is sufficient. What then is the need for anyone else?

Section III: Verses (99-135)

The account of Moses (sws) ended on the previous verse. In these succeeding verses, the same topic is taken up as was discussed in the introductory part of the *sūrah* in a new style and with new arguments. Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is addressed and told that the anecdote just narrated to him is not merely a tale of the past; he and his followers are going through similar circumstances. Those who are trying to evade him and lead others away from him will not only bear their own burden of sins on the Day of Judgement but also of those who were led astray by them. That day will be very harsh. None will have a say in it. Everyone will appear before God and before Him no one will be able to intercede for anyone unless He allows. The reminder which has been revealed to the Prophet (sws) warns people of all dangers; he should recite it out to people. Those who have the urge will benefit from it and he who evades it should be left alone by him. He is not responsible for such people. Moreover, he should recite out this Qur'ān to people in a gradual way just as it is being revealed gradually. There is much wisdom in this methodology. He should not show haste in this matter for it will deprive everyone of its blessings. Adam (sws) showed haste and the consequence was that Satan was able to expel him from Paradise. The Prophet (sws) should direct the attention of those who are demanding a sign of punishment from him to the history of their own land. Moreover, he should be patient on their sarcastic remarks and to attain patience fervently adhere to the prayer. He should not go after the rich and the affluent to make them accept faith: neither is

87. "Only God is your deity; there is no other deity except Him. His knowledge embraces everything."

he in need of their wealth and resources nor is his preaching dependent on their patronage. God is his patron and sufficient to sustain him and his companions. Those who are demanding signs from him should be told that the greatest sign is the Qur'ān that has been sent to them. It has been sent to them so that the truth can be conclusively conveyed to them. He should also tell them that if they think that this sign is not enough and would like a sign of the promised doom, then they should wait and he too will wait.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

كَذٰلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ مَا قَدْ سَبَقَ ۚ وَقَدْ اٰتَيْنٰكَ مِنْ لَّدُنَّا ذِكْرًا ﴿٩٩﴾ مَّنْ اَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ فَاِنَّهٗ يَحْمِلُ
يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وِزْرًا ﴿١٠٠﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهِ ؕ وَسَآءَ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ حِمْلًا ﴿١٠١﴾ يَّوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّوْرِ وَنَحْشُرُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ
يَوْمَئِذٍ زُرْقًا ﴿١٠٢﴾ يَّتَخَافَتُوْنَ بَيْنَهُمْ اِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ اِلَّا عَشْرًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ نَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِذْ يَقُوْلُ اَمْثَلُهُمْ طَرِيْقَةً
اِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ اِلَّا يَوْمًا ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَيَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْجِبَالِ فَقُلْ يَنْسِفُهَا رَبِّيْ نَسْفًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ لَّا
تَرٰى فِيْهَا عِوَجًا وَّلَآ اَمْتًا ﴿١٠٧﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ الدَّاعِيَ لَا عِوَجَ لَهٗ ۚ وَخَشَعَتِ الْاَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ اِلَّا
هَمْسًا ﴿١٠٨﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ اِلَّا مَنْ اَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَرَضِيَ لَهٗ قَوْلًا ﴿١٠٩﴾ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمَا
خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيْطُوْنَ بِهٖ عِلْمًا ﴿١١٠﴾ وَعَنَتِ الْوُجُوْهُ لِلْحَيِّ الْقَيُّوْمِ ؕ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ حَمَلَ ظُلْمًا ﴿١١١﴾ وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ
مِنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا يَخٰفُ ظُلْمًا وَّلَا هَضْمًا ﴿١١٢﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَّصَرَّفْنَا فِيْهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيْدِ
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُوْنَ اَوْ يُحْدِثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا ﴿١١٣﴾ فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۚ وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْاٰنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يُّقْضٰۤى اِلَيْكَ
وَحْيُهٗ ۫ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ زِدْنِيْ عِلْمًا ﴿١١٤﴾ وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَآ اِلٰۤى اٰدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهٗ عَزْمًا ﴿١١٥﴾ وَاِذْ قُلْنَا
لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوْا لِاٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُوْۤا اِلَّاۤ اِبْلِيْسَ ؕ اَبٰى ﴿١١٦﴾ فَقُلْنَا يٰۤاٰدَمُ اِنَّ هٰذَا عَدُوٌّ لَّكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكُمَا
مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقٰى ﴿١١٧﴾ اِنَّ لَكَ اَلَّا تَجُوْعَ فِيْهَا وَلَا تَعْرٰى ﴿١١٨﴾ وَاَنَّكَ لَا تَظْمَؤُا فِيْهَا وَلَا تَضْحٰى ﴿١١٩﴾ فَوَسْوَسَ
اِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطٰنُ قَالَ يٰۤاٰدَمُ هَلْ اَدُلُّكَ عَلٰى شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلٰى ﴿١٢٠﴾ فَاَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْاٰتُهُمَا
وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفٰنِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَّرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ ۬ وَعَصٰۤى اٰدَمُ رَبَّهٗ فَغَوٰى ﴿١٢١﴾ ثُمَّ اجْتَبٰهُ رَبُّهٗ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدٰى ﴿١٢٢﴾
قَالَ اهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيْعًا ۚ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۚ فَاِمَّا يَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِّنِّيْ هُدًى ۙ فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا
يَشْقٰى ﴿١٢٣﴾ وَمَنْ اَعْرَضَ عَنْ ذِكْرِيْ فَاِنَّ لَهٗ مَعِيْشَةً ضَنْكًا وَّنَحْشُرُهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ اَعْمٰى ﴿١٢٤﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِيْۤ

اَعۡمٰی وَ قَدۡ کُنۡتُ بَصِیۡرًا ﴿۱۲۵﴾ قَالَ کَذٰلِکَ اَتَتۡکَ اٰیٰتُنَا فَنَسِیۡتَہَا ۚ وَ کَذٰلِکَ الۡیَوۡمَ تُنۡسٰی ﴿۱۲۶﴾ وَ کَذٰلِکَ نَجۡزِیۡ
مَنۡ اَسۡرَفَ وَ لَمۡ یُؤۡمِنۡۢ بِاٰیٰتِ رَبِّہٖ ؕ وَ لَعَذَابُ الۡاٰخِرَۃِ اَشَدُّ وَ اَبۡقٰی ﴿۱۲۷﴾ اَفَلَمۡ یَہۡدِ لَہُمۡ کَمۡ اَہۡلَکۡنَا قَبۡلَہُمۡ مِّنَ الۡقُرُوۡنِ
یَمۡشُوۡنَ فِیۡ مَسٰکِنِہِمۡ ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِکَ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّاُولِی النُّہٰی ﴿۱۲۸﴾ وَ لَوۡ لَا کَلِمَۃٌ سَبَقَتۡ مِنۡ رَّبِّکَ لَکَانَ لِزَامًا وَّ اَجَلٌ
مُّسَمًّی ﴿۱۲۹﴾ فَاصۡبِرۡ عَلٰی مَا یَقُوۡلُوۡنَ وَ سَبِّحۡ بِحَمۡدِ رَبِّکَ قَبۡلَ طُلُوۡعِ الشَّمۡسِ وَ قَبۡلَ غُرُوۡبِہَا ۚ وَ مِنۡ اٰنَآیِٔ الَّیۡلِ
فَسَبِّحۡ وَ اَطۡرَافَ النَّہَارِ لَعَلَّکَ تَرۡضٰی ﴿۱۳۰﴾ وَ لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَیۡنَیۡکَ اِلٰی مَا مَتَّعۡنَا بِہٖۤ اَزۡوَاجًا مِّنۡہُمۡ زَہۡرَۃَ الۡحَیٰوۃِ
الدُّنۡیَا ۙ لِنَفۡتِنَہُمۡ فِیۡہِ ؕ وَ رِزۡقُ رَبِّکَ خَیۡرٌ وَّ اَبۡقٰی ﴿۱۳۱﴾ وَ اۡمُرۡ اَہۡلَکَ بِالصَّلٰوۃِ وَ اصۡطَبِرۡ عَلَیۡہَا ؕ لَا نَسۡـَٔلُکَ رِزۡقًا ؕ
نَحۡنُ نَرۡزُقُکَ ؕ وَ الۡعَاقِبَۃُ لِلتَّقۡوٰی ﴿۱۳۲﴾ وَ قَالُوۡا لَوۡ لَا یَاۡتِیۡنَا بِاٰیَۃٍ مِّنۡ رَّبِّہٖ ؕ اَوَ لَمۡ تَاۡتِہِمۡ بَیِّنَۃُ مَا فِی الصُّحُفِ الۡاُوۡلٰی ﴿۱۳۳﴾
وَ لَوۡ اَنَّاۤ اَہۡلَکۡنٰہُمۡ بِعَذَابٍ مِّنۡ قَبۡلِہٖ لَقَالُوۡا رَبَّنَا لَوۡ لَاۤ اَرۡسَلۡتَ اِلَیۡنَا رَسُوۡلًا فَنَتَّبِعَ اٰیٰتِکَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ نَّذِلَّ وَ
نَخۡزٰی ﴿۱۳۴﴾ قُلۡ کُلٌّ مُّتَرَبِّصٌ فَتَرَبَّصُوۡا ۚ فَسَتَعۡلَمُوۡنَ مَنۡ اَصۡحٰبُ الصِّرَاطِ السَّوِیِّ وَ مَنِ اہۡتَدٰی ﴿۱۳۵﴾

In this way, We also narrate to you anecdotes of the past and have also given you a reminder specially from Our self. Those who turn away from it will bear a heavy burden on the Day of Judgement. They will always remain under it and on the Day of Judgement it will be a very heavy burden. The Day the trumpet shall be blown and We shall gather the wrongdoers with their eyes turning blue out of fear. They will be secretly saying to one another: "You must have hardly stayed for ten days." We very well know what they will say when the most clever among them will say: "At most, you have must have stayed for a day." (99-104)

And they ask you about the mountains. Say: My Lord will scatter them away in the form of dust and level the earth flat. You will neither see any bend in it nor a high place. On that Day, everyone will follow the one who calls out. They shall dare not the slightest deviate from him and all voices shall be lowered before the Most Merciful God. You will only be able to hear hushed whispers. On that Day, intercession will be of no avail except if the Merciful allows someone and approves of him to say something. He knows all that is in front of them and behind them, and their knowledge cannot grasp Him. Everyone's faces will be bent down before the Ever-Living and Ever-Sustaining God. And he who is guilty of any form of polytheism will face humiliation. And he who does righteous deeds and he is also a believer shall neither fear any injustice nor oppression. (105-112)

And in this way We have revealed it in the form of an Arabic Qur'ān and have mentioned My warning in it in various ways so that these people remain secure from God's wrath or it may produce some insight in them. So, exalted is God, the real king. Thus you should not show haste in acquiring the Qur'ān before its revelation is

complete and keep praying: My Lord! Increase my knowledge further. (113-114)

And before this, We had imposed the obligation of a promise on Adam, but he forgot. And We did not find him strong-willed. And when We asked the angels: "prostrate before Adam," they prostrated except Iblīs. He refused to do so. At this, We said: "Adam! He is an enemy to you and to your wife. So, he should not succeed in expelling you and your wife from this orchard so that you end up deprived. Here you have the comfort of not being hungry nor will you need any clothes; neither will thirst bother you nor will you feel the sun." But Satan tempted him. He said: "Adam! Should I inform you of a tree which has eternal life and of a kingdom which shall never perish?" So, both ate that tree's fruit. At this, their hidden parts became evident to them and they began covering themselves with the leaves of that orchard. And Adam disobeyed the directive of his Lord; he was thus led astray. Then his Lord blessed him, graciously accepted his repentance and guided him. He ordered: "All of you get down from here. You shall remain enemies of one another. Thus if there comes to you guidance from Me, then he who follows My guidance will neither go astray nor will be deprived. And he who turns away from My reminder, for him is a life of affliction and on the Day of Judgement, We shall raise him as a blind person." He will say: "Lord! Why did you raise me blind? I was one who had eyesight?" God will reply: "Our revelations came to you in this world in this way; so you ignored them. Today you shall be ignored likewise." And in this way shall We treat him in exchange who exceeds the limits and does not profess faith in the revelations of his Lord and the torment of the Hereafter will be more severe and more lasting. (115-127)

Was this not enough to guide them that We have destroyed many nations before them in whose settlements they walk about? Indeed, there are many signs in this for those who have intellect. And had a matter not been decreed earlier by your Lord and there was not a prescribed time, a torment would have surely visited them. So, show patience on whatever they say and keep extolling your Lord while glorifying Him before the sun rises and before it sets and glorify him in the night times too and on the margins of the day also so that you are showered with favours. And do not even glance at the resources of worldly pleasures We have given some of their groups in it for their trial, and your Lord's sustenance is better and lasting. And ask your people to offer prayer and adhere to it yourself also. We do not ask for any sustenance from you. It is We Who shall provide sustenance to you, and success in the end is for piety. (128-132)

And they say: "Why does he not bring a sign from his Lord for us?" Has not the testimony of what is written in their earlier scriptures reached them? And if We destroyed them before this through some torment, they would have said: "Lord! Why did You not send a messenger to us that we may have followed Your revelations before being humiliated and disgraced?" Say: Each one is waiting; so, you also wait. Soon you will know who is treading the right path and who the wrong one and who will reach the destination. (133-135)

Explanation

كَذٰلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ مَا قَدْ سَبَقَ ۚ وَقَدْ اٰتَيْنٰكَ مِنْ لَّدُنَّا ذِكْرًا ﴿٩٩﴾[88]

The word refers to the account of Moses (sws) that has just been narrated. The verse implies that these important tales of the past are being narrated to the Prophet (sws) from which it becomes clear how God dealt with His messengers and their rivals. He can see the fate of his rivals in the mirror of these accounts. The word ذِكْر refers to the Qur'ān. The Almighty has preserved in the Qur'ān the portion of accounts of the previous messengers and their teachings that was meant to be preserved. Similarly, the guidance that was to be revealed to Muḥammad (sws) as the last Prophet is also found in it.

مَنْ اَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ فَاِنَّهٗ يَحْمِلُ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وِزْرًا ﴿١٠٠﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهِ ۭ وَسَاۗءَ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ حِمْلًا ﴿١٠١﴾[89]

These verses sound a threat to those who will evade this reminder. The antecedent of the pronoun in خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهِ is for the consequence of the word وِزْر (burden) which is punishment. The will forever undergo punishment. The burden is called heavy for this very reason. Moreover, no one will help them in carrying this burden. Everyone will bear his own burden.

يَّوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّوْرِ وَنَحْشُرُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ يَوْمَىِٕذٍ زُرْقًا ﴿١٠٢﴾[90]

The word زُرْق is the plural of أَزْرَق. The latter word refers to blue eyes. However, as an idiom, it also refers to a person who is terrified. This is because in extreme fear a person's eyes turn blue.

The previous verses mentioned the Day of Judgement. This verse portrays it. The indirect style found in "the Day the trumpet shall be blown" reflects the horrific nature of the event: a great cataclysm will ensue but no one will know from where the sound is coming.

يَّتَخَافَتُوْنَ بَيْنَهُمْ اِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ اِلَّا عَشْرًا ﴿١٠٣﴾[91]

The verse implies that today these people have absolutely no fear of the Day of Judgement. In the first place they think that it is improbable. If they believe in it to

88. In this way, We also narrate to you anecdotes of the past and have also given you a reminder specially from Our self.

89. Those who turn away from it will bear a heavy burden on the Day of Judgement. They will always remain under it and on the Day of Judgement it will be a very heavy burden.

90. The Day the trumpet shall be blown and We shall gather the wrongdoers with their eyes turning blue out of fear.

91. They will be secretly saying to one another: "You must have hardly stayed for ten days."

any extent, they ignore it thinking that life, then death, then *barzakh* and then the hereafter are such far off that there is no need to worry about it and spoil the pleasures of this life. Today they may regard it to be far-fetched but when it will come, they whisper about the time of their stay in this world. I have explained at another place that people will have no awareness of their time in *barzakh* when they rise on the day of Judgement. They would think that they had just slept and have now awakened.

As for the life of this world, as long as a person lives through it, he keeps thinking that he has a lot of time left. However, when death stares him in the eye, at that time he thinks that what he thought to be a long span turned out to be so brief. This is especially true about a life spent in indifference: it seems like a dream from which one has woken up. It is on this indifference that the Qur'ān has warned about here: it is not how a person feels here because that is a total deception; the real feeling will be the one when the truth comes before a person.

نَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِذْ يَقُوْلُ اَمْثَلُهُمْ طَرِيْقَةً اِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ اِلَّا يَوْمًا ﴿۱۰۴﴾[92]

The implication of this verse is that no one should think that details of what will happen on the Day of Judgement the Almighty is informing them of are baseless and are being presented to strike awe in their hearts. All this is destined to happen.

The word اَمْثَلْ means "better and superior." Here it is used sarcastically. In other words, this would be the statement of the person considered the most clever and superior among them.

Those who are adept in classical Arabic poetry know that the deception on which these verses warn is the one with which many poets were afflicted and would thereby regard the Day of Judgement to be حدیث خرافة (a baseless thing). I am intentionally abstaining from citing relevant couplets and perhaps there is no need too for citing them. This is because this matter is not just specific to the age of *jāhiliyyah*. Even today people are under this deception. The Qur'ān has warned people of precisely this.

وَيَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْجِبَالِ فَقُلْ يَنْسِفُهَا رَبِّيْ نَسْفًا ﴿۱۰۵﴾ فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا ﴿۱۰۶﴾ لَّا تَرٰى فِيْهَا عِوَجًا وَّلَآ اَمْتًا ﴿۱۰۷﴾[93]

The word نَسْف means to uproot something, separate grain from chaff, make something into straw and ash and have it blown away.

The antecedent of the pronoun in فَيَذَرُهَا is land. Pronouns are used in this way for obvious and famous things. Several instances of such pronouns can be seen in the Qur'ān for the sky and the earth. Thus in verse 45 of Sūrah al-Fāṭir: مَا تَرَكَ عَلٰى ظَهْرِهَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ the antecedent of the pronoun هَا is the earth though it is not mentioned.

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92. We very well know what they will say when the most clever among them will say: "At most, you have must have stayed for a day."

93. And they ask you about the mountains. Say: My Lord will scatter them away in the form of dust and level the earth flat. You will neither see any bend in it nor a high place.

قَاع صَفْصَف refers to barren and flat land, which does not have any high or low surfaces, vegetation or trees.

The word اَمْت refers to high ground. Regarding the Day of Judgement, the Arabs had another misconception: they thought that the mountains could never be destroyed. Even their intellectuals had this view, let alone the masses. Zuhayr whose compositions belong to the category of wisdom poetry is reported to have said: [94]

أَلا أَرى على الحَوَادثِ باقِيَا

ولا خالِدا الّا الجِبالَ الرّواسِيَا

(Except for these mountains implanted so deeply, I do not regard anything else to withstand the calamities of time)

When the Qur'ān warned people of the cataclysm that would take place on the Day of Judgement, because of this very misconception, many would sarcastically ask the Prophet (sws) about the fate of mountains.

The people of Arabia regarded the mountains to be huge and indestructible; however, today's human beings regard themselves to be unconquerable and proudly think that very soon they will conquer the whole universe. In the presence of this notion, the question of the hereafter does not even pass their minds.

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ الدَّاعِيَ لَا عِوَجَ لَهٗ ۚ وَخَشَعَتِ الْاَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ اِلَّا هَمْسًا ﴿۱۰۸﴾ [95]

The word هَمْس refers to a low and stifled sound like a whisper. The implication of the verse is that today they are not listening to the calls of God's Messenger who is calling them to the truth and vehemently opposing him. But on the day of Judgement they will follow the calls of a caller who will lead them to doom.

يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ اِلَّا مَنْ اَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَرَضِيَ لَهٗ قَوْلًا ﴿۱۰۹﴾ [96]

The exception mentioned in this verse is severed (*munqaṭa'*). The verse refutes the claim of intercession of the Arabs. They reckoned that the deities they worship are favoured by God. These deities will themselves intercede for whomsoever of their worshippers they want to. The verse negates this claim. It states the two conditions of intercession which can be beneficial. Any concept of intercession that does not take

94. Al-Zuhayr, *Dīwān*, 48.

95. On that Day, everyone will follow the one who calls out. They shall dare not the slightest deviate from him and all voices shall be lowered before the Most Merciful God. You will only be able to hear hushed whispers.

96. On that Day, intercession will be of no avail except if the Merciful allows someone and approves of him to say something.

these conditions into consideration is baseless and a person who expects otherwise will come to know of this fact on the Day of Judgement. I will explain this aspect more under verse 28 of Sūrah al-Anbiyā'.

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيْطُوْنَ بِهٖ عِلْمًا ﴿۱۱۰﴾[97]

This verse has been explained under the throne verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The implication is that God's knowledge is all embracing. None else can grasp the extent of God's knowledge. When this is the case, who can add to His knowledge and on this basis intercede before Him for someone. God does not need to find out the details about the character of a person. This issue has been discussed under verse 87 of Sūrah Maryam too. Readers can look it up.

وَعَنَتِ الْوُجُوْهُ لِلْحَيِّ الْقَيُّوْمِ ؕ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ حَمَلَ ظُلْمًا ﴿۱۱۱﴾[98]

The word عنو means to express humility and meekness and the word ظُلْم means polytheism, as has been explained at a number of instances.

This verse strikes another blow at the advocates of the wrong conception of intercession. About their alleged intercessors, they thought that they held a very high status before God. They could coax and cajole Him to accept whatever they wanted. They could ask Him with full courage, confidence and insistence to fulfil their desires. Such was the affection God had for them that He would necessary accept their wishes and intercession. The verse negates this concept in an emphatic way.

Here from among the attributes of God, the ones referred to are الْحَيُّ and الْقَيُّوْمُ. The have a special significance. It is known about the Idolaters of Arabia that they did believe in God but because of their polytheistic beliefs, they had relegated him to the status of a helpless elder of a house who had delegated all his responsibilities to others and secluded himself in isolation. This conception of God had made them totally indifferent to His existence and made them trust and depend on their alleged deities and intercessors. Here the Qur'ān has also criticized this view by informing them that God is a living God Who is overseeing the matters of His creatures. He has not left them at the mercy of others and it should not be thought that as the first cause has no role in their lives.

The word ظُلْم refers to polytheism and it is not defined to signify the fact that in whatever form a person indulges in it will not be acceptable to God in the Hereafter. Here it needs to be kept in mind that polytheism is not merely idol-worship; it has some very subtle and blatant forms and each leads to ruin in the hereafter. I have been

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97. He knows all that is in front of them and behind them, and their knowledge cannot grasp Him.

98. Everyone's faces will be bent down before the Ever-Living and Ever-Sustaining God. And he who is guilty of any form of polytheism will face humiliation.

referring to its various types during the course of this tafsīr and have also penned an independent tract on this subject: *Essence of Polytheism*.

وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا يَخٰفُ ظُلْمًا وَّلَا هَضْمًا ﴿١١٢﴾[99]

When ظُلْم and هَضْم occur together the way they have in this verse, the former refers to usurpation of rights and the latter to embezzlement and injustice. In the first, a person does not fulfil his rights towards others and in the second a person is guilty of extorting from others.

The previous verse pointed out that doomed is the person who indulges in any form of polytheism. Here it is said in parallel that he who does righteous deeds and is also a believer, he will be fully rewarded and should not fear any appropriation or extortion.

The condition of being a believer shows that the person is doing righteous deeds while adhering to monotheism; if these deeds are contaminated with polytheism in any way, then they will not carry any weight before God.

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَّصَرَّفْنَا فِيْهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيْدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُوْنَ اَوْ يُحْدِثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا ﴿١١٣﴾[100]

This verse is coordinated to what is said earlier from where this subject was brought up. In verses 99-100 it was pointed out that God has specially revealed this reminder from Himself: those who turn away from it will carry a heavy burden on the Day of Judgement. After that a warning was sounded regarding the advent of the Day of Judgement. After this mention, the previous subject is taken up with a new introduction and more details.

It is stated that for this purpose of reminder the Qur'ān has been revealed: the necessary consequences of denying it are explained in it so that if people want to adopt the path of piety and God-consciousness, they are afforded this opportunity; if they do not do so, then they shall stand fully cognizant of the fact that if they are seized by God, then they do not have any excuse to offer for their attitude.

The assertion of revealing the Qur'ān in Arabic has been made as a favour to the Arabs and also as a means of conclusive communication of the truth. In other words, it is a great blessing of God that this Book has been revealed in their own language to remind them and convey the truth to them in this way. Now, they cannot present the excuse that if a messenger had come to with a book in their language, they would have been the foremost in accepting faith. The Qur'ān has done away with this excuse.

The word تصریف means to explain something in a multiple and a variety of ways, as

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99. And he who does righteous deeds and he is also a believer shall neither fear any injustice nor oppression.

100. And in this way We have revealed it in the form of an Arabic Qur'ān and have mentioned My warning in it in various ways so that these people remain secure from God's wrath or it may produce some insight in them.

has been indicated at various instances. The implication is that in the first case, the Book has been revealed in their language and in the second place not left any ambiguity in stating the consequences of evading it: they have been fully elucidated on the basis of knowledge, intellect, history as well as on the basis of the signs found within human beings and those around him. If even after this elaborate arrangement, these people do not mend their ways, who is to blame?

The purpose of all this arrangement is to create piety and God-consciousness. If they do not understand this, then at least they should know the purpose of being sent in this world and what they, on the contrary, are guilty of. It may be kept in mind that the Qur'ān has once again reminded the Arabs of that part of their history in which their forefathers Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) had made them inhabit the land of Arabia. The word احداث is pointing to this aspect. The expression احداث ذکر means to once again remind people of some anecdote.

فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۚ وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْاٰنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يُّقْضٰٓى اِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهٗ ۡ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ زِدْنِيْ عِلْمًا ﴿۱۱۴﴾[101]

In order to understand the correct meaning of this verse, readers are advised to look up what is written under verses 64-65 of Sūrah Maryam. The sole weapon of the Prophet (sws) against the onslaughts of his rivals was the Qur'ān. Thus he was naturally anxious to receive it. It would guide him in his hardships, assure him in his travails and provide him with decisive answers to the never ending sequence of demands and questions posed to him. For this reason, he would always be waiting for new guidance from God much like a soldier waiting for fresh supplies to combat a huge army. To allay these worries, he is assured that he should not hastily demand the revelation of the Qur'ān. The exalted God knows what benefits are there in its piece-meal revelation; He is the real king of the universe and the reminder sounded by him to people is His decree. It is not a request or a pleading. Regardless of the people's response to this Book, the Prophet (sws) should continue to recite it out to them in the gradual sequence it is being revealed. God fully knows the wisdom in the time span He has allocated for it. He should not ask to have it hastily sent down before this time frame and on the contrary keep praying that his Lord may increase his knowledge.

This subject is discussed in the Qur'ān at many instances and everywhere with this background. Our exegetes have confined its meaning to a certain understanding. They contend that when Gabriel would recite the revelation to the Prophet (sws), he would show haste in acquiring it and was hence stopped from doing so. This in itself is correct that intense interest does make a person impatient. When a much awaited letter arrives, we try to read it in one go. This is a natural sentiment and the Prophet (sws) must have had it for the Qur'ān as well. However, it is not correct that the Prophet

101. Thus you should not show haste in acquiring the Qur'ān before its revelation is complete and keep praying: My Lord! Increase my knowledge further.

(sws) has been stopped on expressing this. The real background has already been referred to. This subject is also brought up at other instances in the Qur'ān and if they are read together, the whole matter will become evident.

وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَآ اِلٰٓى اٰدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهٗ عَزْمًا ﴿١١٥﴾[102]

The expression عَهِدَ اِلٰى means "to impose a responsibility on someone."

In the previous verse, the Prophet (sws) has been stopped from showing haste regarding the Qur'ān. Here, in this verse in order to explain the harms of haste, the incident of Adam (sws) and Satan is referred to: it was this hastiness that made Adam (sws) commit a mistake. Satan took advantage of this weakness found in human nature and enticed Adam (sws): he disobeyed God's directive regarding the forbidden tree. The result was that Adam (sws) was expelled from Paradise and made to inhabit the earth, as a place of his trial and test. The purpose of citing this incident is that haste never pays. Earlier, in the account of Moses (sws), it was also shown that his hastiness did not produce good results and his nation was afflicted with a grave trial. In the background of these incidents, the Prophet (sws) is instructed that he too should not be impatient in his preaching: he should do whatever he is being revealed to him a gradual way. If he shows impatience, it may result in some lacunae in the training of his people, even if his intention and objective is good. It may well be that some devil or Sāmirī take advantage of this and lead them astray.

The words مِنْ قَبْلُ (before this) refer to the past episode of Adam (sws) and Satan. In other words, just as the Prophet (sws) is being asked to not show haste, Adam (sws), his forefather and that of while mankind, was given this directive but he could not comply with it. The result was that Satan succeeded in deceiving him. Since past experiences, especially if they relate to one's own lineage are a means of guidance for present and future generations, it was said that the Prophet (sws) must keep them in mind.

The word نَسِيَ refers to something slipping the mind. In other words, the directive given to Adam (sws) slipped his mind once he was overcome with impatience even though it was transient. He was not able to maintain his resolve. Details of the directive given to him and the nature of his mistake are coming up. This verse merely says that all emotions are part of human nature but must be confined within limits. If they remain within these limits, they produce great benefits for individuals and for societies. However, if they become unbridled, they are a great danger to both. People must inculcate in themselves the traits of patience and resolve to keep these emotions in check. In the absence of this control, an emotion can wreak havoc any time. Haste is an emotion among others and it is found in human nature. In verse 37 of Sūrah al-Anbiyā' and in verse11 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, it is thus respectively stated: خُلِقَ الْاِنْسَانُ مِنْ

102. And before this, We had imposed the obligation of a promise on Adam, but he forgot. And We did not find him strong-willed.

عَجَلٍ (human beings are made from the substance of haste) and كَانَ الإِنْسَانُ عَجُوْلًا (human beings are impatient). This emotion is advantageous for people only if it is controlled by patience and resolve otherwise it will jeopardise their life.

The last part of the verse is meant to point to the impatience shown by Adam (sws) and inform the Prophet (sws) of its consequences.

وَاِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوْا لِاٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِبْلِيْسَ ؕ اَبٰى ﴿۱۱۶﴾[103]

In the previous verse that part of the incident of Adam (sws) and Satan has been referred to which was needed for the specific objective it was cited. Now the actual incident is described. By summarizing an incident before it is actually mentioned, it becomes very helpful in understanding the coherence of a discourse. The Qur'ān has adopted this style at various instances. In the incident of the seven sleepers in Sūrah al-Khahf too this style has been adopted.

The incident of Adam (sws) and Satan has also been discussed in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah al-A'rāf. Repeating it here would be needless. Readers may look up what is written under verses 30-39 of Sūrah al-Baqarah and verses 11-14 of Sūrah al-A'rāf. The wisdom behind this directive, the nature of prostration, the reason for including both the jinn and angels in the directive and the arrogance of Satan, all have been explained to the best of my understanding.

فَقُلْنَا يٰٓاٰدَمُ اِنَّ هٰذَا عَدُوٌّ لَّكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكُمَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقٰى ﴿۱۱۷﴾[104]

Not only did Satan refuse prostration, in frenzy of jealousy, he also challenged God, as has been explained under verses 14-22 of Sūrah al-A'rāf. He claimed that if he was given this respite, he would prove that that neither are human beings worthy of any superiority over him nor do they deserve Paradise; most of them would become his own followers. On the one hand, God gave him this respite and warned him that He will cast him and all his followers in Hell and on the other hand, informed Adam (sws) that he should stay in Paradise but should remember that Satan is his eternal enemy. He should stand guard against him lest he leads them astray and haves him expelled from Paradise and he ends up in deprivation and despair.

اِنَّ لَكَ اَلَّا تَجُوْعَ فِيْهَا وَلَا تَعْرٰى ﴿۱۱۸﴾ وَاَنَّكَ لَا تَظْمَؤُا فِيْهَا وَلَا تَضْحٰى ﴿۱۱۹﴾[105]

In these two verses, a very comprehensive picture of the Paradise in which Adam

103. And when We asked the angels: "prostrate before Adam," they prostrated except Iblīs. He refused to do so.

104. At this, We said: "Adam! He is an enemy to you and to your wife. So, he should not succeed in expelling you and your wife from this orchard so that you end up deprived."

105. "Here you have the comfort of not being hungry nor will you need any clothes; neither will thirst bother you nor will you feel the sun."

(sws) had been placed. What is said here is that he will neither face the hardships of cold nor of hot weather.

In cold weather, hunger and shelter are needed and in hot weather protection from the sun and water for drinking are needed. Those who are aware of classical Arabic literature know that they would refer to the pangs of hot and cold weather by mentioning these aspects. Some people are of the view that it would have been more apt to mention thirst with hunger and the heat of the sun with shelter. In our opinion, this is the result of a deprivation of literary flair for Arabic.

فَوَسْوَسَ اِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطٰنُ قَالَ يٰٓاٰدَمُ هَلْ اَدُلُّكَ عَلٰى شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلٰى ﴿۱۲۰﴾[106]

Though Satan had been expelled from Paradise for showing arrogance and disobeying God, he had sought respite from Him until the Day of Judgement to entice Adam (sws) and his progeny. Thus he came to him even in Paradise to whisper his suggestions to him cited in the verse. He tried to entice Adam (sws) into eating the forbidden fruit by telling him that this will ensure his eternal stay in Paradise. In the first place, human beings have this weakness to do the very thing they have been stopped from; in the second, Adam (sws) did fear that he may be asked to go out of Paradise because God had warned him that Satan was his eternal enemy and may have him driven out of Paradise. Satan perceived this fear found in Adam (sws) and was successful in convincing him that if he wanted eternal life and an eternal kingdom, he should taste this fruit. Being overwhelmed with the desire to live eternally, Adam (sws) forgot that God had warned him about the enmity of Satan. He regarded his enemy to be his well-wisher and was deceived by him.

It is evident from this that though Satan is an eternal enemy of Adam's progeny, his most successful line of attack is the one he adopts in the garb of being a well-wisher and friend. He comes in this garb and makes people realize that the secret to their cultural and social development lies in the very things God and His Messenger have disallowed to them. Even in current times, we can see that this precisely is the greatest argument presented by the agents of Satan to inveigle human beings.

In verse 20 of Sūrah al-A'rāf, the topic discussed in this verse is stated thus: مَانَهٰىكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَكُوْنَا مَلَكَيْنِ اَوْ تَكُوْنَا مِنَ الْخٰلِدِيْنَ (your Lord has only stopped you from this tree lest you become angels or that you may acquire immortality). Here the question arises that in the verse under discussion, the words used are مُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلٰى (eternal kingdom) and in Sūrah al-A'rāf, the words are اَنْ تَكُوْنَا مَلَكَيْنِ (lest you make become angels). Though these may not be two contradictory statements, but they sure are different. How can they be reconciled? In order to do away with this discrepancy, some people have read the Sūrah al-A'rāf verse as اَنْ تَكُوْنَا مَلَكِيْنِ (lest you become

106. But Satan tempted him. He said: "Adam! Should I inform you of a tree which has eternal life and of a kingdom which shall never perish?"

kings). However, in the first place, this reconciliation is not very sound and in the second the *mutawātir* reading is the one only found in the *muṣḥaf* and *non-mutawātir* readings are not acceptable.

In my view, the answer to this question is that Satan tried to entice Adam (sws) and Eve in various ways. At times, he told them that eating this fruit would turn them into angels and at times he told them that they would gain an eternal kingdom. The basis of my view is that it is explicitly mentioned in verse 22 of Sūrah al-A'rāf that Satan had tried hard to inveigle Adam (sws). He had to give him a lot of assurances in order to win him over. While explaining the afore-mentioned verse, I had written that the expression فَدَلّٰىهُمَا بِغُرُوْرٍ means to gradually entice and lead a person away. It is thus evident that Adam (sws) did not succumb to Satan with just one of the outcomes he had mentioned. It is only after he had led Adam (sws) to believe of various fantastic outcomes and that too at different instances that this happened. The purpose was to somehow deceive him.

فَاَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْاٰتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفٰنِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَّرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ ۛ وَعَصٰٓى اٰدَمُ رَبَّهٗ فَغَوٰى ﴿١٢١﴾[107]

This verse has been explained in Sūrah al-Baqarah and in verse 22 of Sūrah al-A'rāf too.

The word غَوٰى means "to go astray." The implication of the verse is that Adam (sws) was deceived by Satan and he tasted the forbidden fruit. As a result, he was deprived of his attire of Paradise about which it was mentioned in verse 118 that God had promised never to deprive him. Adam (sws) and Eve began covering their bodies in embarrassment and uneasiness. They had taken this step to acquire eternal life in Paradise but the result was that they even lost what they had.

ثُمَّ اجْتَبٰهُ رَبُّهٗ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدٰى ﴿١٢٢﴾[108]

Here اجْتَبٰى is mentioned before Adam (sws) repented and his repentance was accepted. Thus this word means giving Adam (sws) the urge to repent and giving him the words of repentance. In verse 37 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, the words used are: فَتَلَقّٰٓى اٰدَمُ مِنْ رَّبِّهٖ كَلِمٰتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ (Thus Adam learnt some words from his Lord and repented; so, his Lord accepted his repentance; indeed, He is one who graciously accepts repentance and is very merciful). In verse 23 of Sūrah al-A'rāf, the words of repentance are cited thus: قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَآ اَنْفُسَنَا ۖ وَاِنْ لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ (They prayed: Lord! We have been unjust to our souls and if you do not forgive us and have mercy

107. So, both ate that tree's fruit. At this, their hidden parts became evident to them and they began covering themselves with the leaves of that orchard. And Adam disobeyed the directive of his Lord; he was thus led astray.

108. Then his Lord blessed him, graciously accepted his repentance and guided him.

on us, we would end up in loss). It is evident from this that Adam (sws) was very ashamed at his mistake and it is God's law that if a person realizes his mistake, he is blessed with the urge to repent from God and God makes him even more close to Him. It is this status which is called اجْتَبٰی in this verse. There is no doubt that very fortunate is the person who besides realizing his blemish and having the urge to repent is revealed words of repentance by God.

Consider the expression فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدٰى. The preposition عَلٰى evidences the fact that it encompasses the meaning of رحم ie., he once again received God's mercy and guidance. I have referred to this in verse 37 of Sūrah al-Baqarah as well. The word هَدٰى refers to the fact that God guided him in his future phases so that he could combat the onslaughts of Satan.

This verse also refutes the Christian belief of original sin and also of those who regard Adam (sws) to be the father of human kind only but not a prophet of God. The words of this verse signify that he was a prophet and sense and reason too demand that God gave him a *sharī'ah* to guide him and his progeny. The next verse explains this.

قَالَ اهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيْعًا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۚ فَاِمَّا يَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِّنِّيْ هُدًى ۙ فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقٰى ﴿١٢٣﴾[109]

This verse has been explained from various aspects under verse 36 of Sūrah al-Baqarah and verse 24 of Sūrah al-A'rāf. I have also tried to explain under these verses the wisdom behind Adam (sws) coming into this world and facing the challenge of Satan. I have further explained that these verses do not address Adam (sws) and Eve; the address is towards Adam (sws) and Satan in the capacity of two groups.

The words بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ refer to the fact that Satan will be their enemy and they too should treat him as their enemy if they want to regain Paradise and end up successful in the Hereafter. This is because every sensible person regards his enemy to be his enemy and is always on guard against him. Only foolish people befriend their enemies and follow their advice.

Those who regard the dual form mentioned here to imply Adam (sws) and Eve as being addressed here are grossly mistaken. In the first place, exactly the same statement is cited in Sūrah al-Baqarah in plural form. Secondly, if the dual form occurs here in the verse under discussion, it is also qualified by the word جَمِيْعًا (all). If Adam (sws) and Eve are addressed here, then this word is absolutely needless here. Thirdly, the natural relationship between Adam (sws) and Eve is not of enmity: it is of love. If there is some hostility between a husband and wife, it is not because they are enemies of one another; it is because of Satan's enticement. However, the enmity between Satan and between Adam (sws) and Eve is natural and extends until the Day

109. He ordered: "All of you get down from here. You shall remain enemies of one another. Thus if there comes to you guidance from Me, then he who follows My guidance will neither go astray nor will be deprived."

of Judgement. The enmity of Satan is based on jealousy and he had openly declared this basis. As far as a human being's enmity for him is concerned, then every sane person should remember that he has been sent out of Paradise to combat this enmity. If he befriends Satan, it would mean that he is calling for his own doom at the hands of his enemy.

Consider next the last part of the verse: "Thus if there comes to you guidance from Me, then he who follows My guidance will neither go astray nor will be deprived." This actually is the weapon which God had blessed Adam (sws) and his progeny with. Since human beings have been sent in this world to combat a very clever foe, it was the will of God that He not only guide them through their nature and intellect but also through divine revelation so that they could fight Satan with double the might and power.

Two things are clearly proven from this verse:

Firstly, the sole means to remain secure from the onslaughts of Satan in this world is the Book of God. He who is deprived of this light will always remain vulnerable to the enticement of devils found both among the jinn and humankind.

Secondly, Adam (sws) was a prophet. He has been sent in this world to counter the onslaughts of Satan for which God's guidance for both Adam (sws) and his progeny is essential. Thus, God must have revealed a *sharī'ah* to him according to the circumstances. I have referred to some directives of his *sharī'ah* under the incident of Abel and Cain in verse 31 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah

وَمَنْ اَعْرَضَ عَنْ ذِكْرِیْ فَاِنَّ لَهٗ مَعِیْشَةً ضَنْكًا وَّنَحْشُرُهٗ یَوْمَ الْقِیٰمَةِ اَعْمٰى ﴿۱۲۴﴾[110]

The expression مَعِیْشَةً ضَنْكًا refers to a life devoid of peace of mind and inner satisfaction.

There is a vacuum in a human being which is only filled by faith in God. So unless he has this faith in him nothing else can give him peace of mind and assurance. Other things, however grand and attractive they may be, can provide temporary joy but they cannot give relief to the anxiety found in the heart and soul of a person. When a child cries because of hunger, it can be appeased for a little while through a nipple or a soother but it receives satisfaction only when a mother feeds it. Without this arrangement, the child remains restless. Similar is the case with a human being. He may provide himself with various means and resources but if he is deprived of faith in God he will remain dissatisfied, hesitant, fearful, unstable and in a state of spiritual crises however much he may try to hide this. The kingdom of the satisfied soul is acquired by true and firm faith. اَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ تَطْمَىِٕنُّ الْقُلُوْبُ (Listen! It is only through God's remembrance that hearts receive assurance).

110. And he who turns away from My reminder, for him is a life of affliction and on the Day of Judgement, We shall raise him as a blind person."

A question may arise here: there are many people who lay claim to faith but they spend their lives in great worries and straitened circumstances; on the other hand, there are so many who regard faith in God to be a hoax but they lead very comfortable and happy lives. The answer to this question is that in the first place here the discussion is not with those who merely lay claim to faith but with those who have true faith. Secondly, we only see the apparent splendour of those whom we regard to be very happy even though they are indifferent to God. If we were able to creep into their hearts, we would be able to see so many threats, doubts and fears concealed in them but they are not apparent to everyone. Only they themselves can see them or those who have the insight of faith in them.

The verse goes on to say that those who evade God's remembrance will be resurrected blind on the Day of Judgement. The reason is that it is this remembrance which removes hurdles from the faculties of sight, hearing and intellect. The Qur'ān has specified that he who evades this remembrance is blind, deaf and intellectually deprived in spite of having the afore-mentioned faculties. As a punishment of grossly disrespecting His favours, God will raise such foolish animals as blind. These favours were not given to people so that they become slaves of what is palpable and tangible; on the contrary, they were given to them to observe signs that are etched in every nook and corner and every particle of this universe. If a person sees but cannot see what is most obvious, then he may see everything but understands nothing.

Here a question arises. In verse 22 of Sūrah Qāf, it is stated: فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَآءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيْدٌ (so, now We have removed that veil which covered you; thus sharp is your eyesight today). On the other hand, it is stated here that God will raise up that person as blind. How can this discrepancy be reconciled? The answer is that there is no discrepancy. In Sūrah Qāf, the subtle implication is that people remain slaves to their faculties in this world; not only do they not realize their blindness, they in fact regard themselves to be intellectuals; however, on the Day of Judgement, they will realize their blindness. Today such is the case that in spite of the fact that the eyes of our scientists are fully equipped with telescopes and microscopes, they are unable to see their own eyes. Yet a day will come when everything will become evident and no would be able to deny the reality. It is to this revelation that the verse of Sūrah Qāf points to.

قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِيْٓ اَعْمٰى وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيْرًا ﴿١٢٥﴾ قَالَ كَذٰلِكَ اَتَتْكَ اٰيٰتُنَا فَنَسِيْتَهَا ۚ وَكَذٰلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنْسٰى ﴿١٢٦﴾[111]

The word نسی here means "to ignore."

The implication of this verse is that if they had been given eyes, why did they not get opened in spite of reminders and warnings? The punishment of such eyes is that

111. He will say: "Lord! Why did you raise me blind? I was one who had eyesight?" God will reply: "Our revelations came to you in this world in this way; so you ignored them. Today you shall be ignored likewise."

they remain shut. Their complaint is of no use. Just as they had ignored God's revelations, they deserve to be ignored themselves.

وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِیْ مَنْ اَسْرَفَ وَلَمْ یُؤْمِنْۢ بِاٰیٰتِ رَبِّهٖ ؕ وَلَعَذَابُ الْاٰخِرَةِ اَشَدُّ وَاَبْقٰی ﴿۱۲۷﴾[112]

The word إسراف means "to exceed the limits." The expression مَنْ اَسْرَفَ refers to people who wasted their talents in the very things they had to abstain from and ignored things they were required to do.

اَفَلَمْ یَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنَ الْقُرُوْنِ یَمْشُوْنَ فِیْ مَسٰكِنِهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّاُولِی النُّهٰی ﴿۱۲۸﴾[113]

The correct meaning of اَفَلَمْ یَهْدِ لَهُمْ would be "was not such and such a thing not enough to open their eyes and give them guidance?"

This is an answer given to those who were demanding a sign for the punishment. Were not the ruins of the destroyed nations like the 'Ād and the Thamūd they pass by in their trade journeys sufficient to open their eyes? Arab poets have versified the destruction of their cities. These cities were situated along the main trade-routes. In the presence of these blatant signs, what more do they want? A sensible person is one who learns from the fate of others and not when his own fate stares him in the eye. If human beings adopt this attitude, then what difference remains between them and animals?

وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لَكَانَ لِزَامًا وَّاَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّی ﴿۱۲۹﴾[114]

The expression اَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّی is coordinated to كَلِمَةٌ. This verse answers the demand of showing a sign of punishment. In other words, if this punishment is not visiting them, it is because its time is fixed according to God's established practice and prescribed law. No one should think that this is a bluff or God does not have the resources to bring it about. This subject is brought up in the Qur'ān at a number of instances. Thus in verse 14 of Sūrah of Sūrah al-Shūrā, it is stated: وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ اِلٰٓی اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّی لَّقُضِیَ بَیْنَهُمْ[115]. It is evident from this that God has appointed a day of accountability for the deniers. For this reason, in spite of the haste shown by the hasty, God is giving them respite. Unfortunate are the people who instead of benefitting from this respite

112. And in this way shall We treat him in exchange who exceeds the limits and does not profess faith in the revelations of his Lord and the torment of the Hereafter will be more severe and more lasting.

113. Was this not enough to guide them that We have destroyed many nations before them in whose settlements they walk about? Indeed, there are many signs in this for those who have intellect.

114. And had a matter not been decreed earlier by your Lord and there was not a prescribed time, a torment would have surely visited them.

115. And had not a thing been ascertained by God till an appointed term, He would have decided among them today.

become even more rebellious.

The word كَلِمَةٌ here refers to the fact that God has already fixed a time of punishment and the expression اَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى is pointing to the fact that a certain time of its advent has been prescribed; its time of arrival is not ambiguous or vague in any way. In God's calendar, its time of arrival is fixed to the second.

فَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوْعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوْبِهَا ۚ وَمِنْ اٰنَآئِ الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَاَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضٰى ﴿١٣٠﴾[116]

The Prophet (sws) is now urged to exercise patience at the nonsense he is facing from his adversaries and to do this he is asked to be diligent in the prayer as much as he can. Patience is based on the belief that whatever happens, happens with God's will, which is based on the greater good of everyone. The greatest and most effective means to fully implant this belief in one's mind is the prayer.

Consider now the expression: وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ. The general meaning of *tasbīḥ* is God's remembrance and this is required all the time. However, here its mention is qualified by time. For this reason, it refers to the prayer. The word *ḥamd* is mentioned right after it to delineate the true form of God's remembrance. While the dominant element in *tasbīḥ* is to absolve God from all negative attributes, the dominant element in *ḥamd* is to affirm all positive attributes in God. If any of these aspects is not kept in mind, the true conception of God is sacrificed, as a result of which the whole system of person's life is ruined. Some religions gave so much importance to the first aspect that God became aloof and inaccessible to them. As a result, they ended up needing mediators and intercessors. In order to safeguard people from this trial, the Qur'ān has directed people to keep in mind both aspects so that their relationship with God is established on the right footing. Without this relationship, a person cannot adhere to the right path.

Consider now the words: قَبْلَ طُلُوْعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوْبِهَا. Before sunrise and sunset come the prayers of *fajr* and *'aṣr*. This is also mentioned in a narrative in the *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī. The reason that both these prayers are mentioned the foremost is their importance in religion.

The words وَمِنْ اٰنَآئِ الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ refer to the night prayers. One of them is *ishā'* and the other is *tahajjud.* The verb is repeated here for emphasis. The emphasis laid is because both these prayers need extra effort.

The words وَاَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ point to the three prayers on the boundaries of the day: *chāsht*, *ẓuhr* and *maghrib*. It is very evident that both *chāsht* and *maghrib* are at the

116. So, show patience on whatever they say and keep extolling your Lord while glorifying Him before the sun rises and before it sets and glorify him in the night times too and on the margins of the day also so that you are showered with favours.

boundaries of the day. Deliberation shows that *ẓuhr* too is at the boundary since the day is divided into two by it. Its time is at the last edge of the first part of the day and at the opening edge of the second part.

This verse clearly negates the view of those people who claim that the timings of the prayer are not mentioned in the Qur'ān. Not only does the Qur'ān mention the obligatory prayers, it also mentions the *tahajjud* and *ishrāq* prayer. The Prophet (sws) has crystallized these timings through his own practice. He has also determined the forms of the prayers and also designated the obligatory and the optional ones. Obviously, it was his task to delineate all these details and to determine the extent and limits of each prayer. This is because he was not merely a person who was to recite out the Qur'ān to people; he was also its teacher.

Here it may be kept in mind that the prayer is stressed upon as a means to acquire perseverance. These verses were revealed in the very tough phase of the struggle between truth and evil. In them, the Prophet (sws) and through him all the *ummah* are informed of a measure that will make them persevere in trying circumstances and make them worthy of God's help as well. In such circumstances, it is not merely the obligatory prayers which are needed; to be diligent in the optional ones is also required. This view of ours is corroborated by the Qur'ān, the sayings of the Prophet (sws) and the practice of the righteous. In general circumstances, the prayers of *tahajjud* and *ishrāq* are optional prayers but in challenging and difficult circumstances, whether they are individual or collective, these prayers must be adhered to as well.

This issue will *insha'Allāh* be discussed in detail in Sūrah al-Muzzammil and at an appropriate instance also shed light on the wisdom behind the timings of the prayers.

Consider next the last expression of the verse: لَعَلَّكَ تَرۡضٰى (so that you are showered with favour). In verse 5 of Sūrah al-Ḍuḥā, it is similarly said: وَلَسَوۡفَ يُعۡطِيۡكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرۡضٰى[117]

Concealed in the two words of the verse under discussion is a world of meaning. The implication is that the Prophet (sws) should adhere to his stance and be diligent in offering the prayer; as a result, God will bless him with so many successes of this world and the next that he will be drenched. Found in these prayers is everything that he needs and there is no need for him to look up to anyone else.

وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيۡنَيۡكَ اِلٰى مَا مَتَّعۡنَا بِهٖۤ اَزۡوَاجًا مِّنۡهُمۡ زَهۡرَةَ الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا ۙ لِنَفۡتِنَهُمۡ فِيۡهِ ؕ وَرِزۡقُ رَبِّكَ خَيۡرٌ وَّاَبۡقٰى ﴿۱۳۱﴾[118]

In this verse, the Prophet (sws) has been stopped from pampering and showing concern for the rich and affluent of his nation. The affluent elements of a nation are responsible for its development or decadence. If they become corrupt, the whole nation follows suit and if they remain upright, uprightness of the whole nation can be

117. And your Lord will give you so that you shall be pleased.

118. And do not even glance at the resources of worldly pleasures We have given some of their groups in it for their trial, and your Lord's sustenance is better and lasting.

expected. For this reason, it has remained the established practice of the prophets of God that they address the elders and chiefs of their nations the foremost. Until and unless they lose hope in them due to their stubbornness and obduracy, they continue to reform them. As per this established practice, Muḥammad (sws) too first called upon the leaders and the affluent elements of the Quraysh. Prophets reckon that if the rich accept the truth, their influence and resources would significantly help the cause and also the poor among the Muslims. This desire is solely based on the sincere well-being of these affluent elements and to keep aloft the word of God. However, when these elements from their attitude showed that their hearts will not melt before the truth, the Almighty stopped the Prophet (sws) from being worried and concerned about them. He was told to not the slightest care about their wealth; his preaching has its own means and resources and God will provide for him and his companions. If these people are not siding with the truth, it is their own deprivation. God does not need their wealth and resources.

The words "and do not even glance at the resources of worldly pleasures" refer to the groups of the Quraysh who held political authority in Makkah and Ṭā'if. Obviously, the Prophet (sws) did not look towards their wealth because of any greed. In fact, the affluent people of these cities were prepared to offer a lot of wealth to the Prophet (sws) on the condition that he desist from his preaching. However, instead of accepting it, he recited before them some verses of the Qur'ān calling them to faith. Prophets of God have never given any importance to the wealth and resources of people who have not consigned their hearts to God. If a sensible person sees that someone is wasting the vigour of his youth and all his abilities to realize a wrong objective, he yearns to see this young foolish man giving due importance to his abilities. In a similar way, the Prophet (sws) too desired that the affluent elements of his nation give due importance to the blessings and favours they have received from God and they do not squander their wealth and abilities to realize the mission of Satan. This desire has its roots in sympathy and concern for others. It has not the slightest semblance of any greed in it. However, this sincerity and concern should have a limit. As soon as it was reached, the Almighty stopped the Prophet (sws) from it.

When the verse says that these favours have been given to the groups by the Almighty, it expresses a fact. If someone has wealth and resources in this world, it is neither because of the inheritance he receives from his forefathers nor the because of his intelligence; they are God's bestowal and by it, He sees whether a person is grateful or ungrateful. Foolish is the person who does not understand the actual reality and uses God's favours to rebel against Him.

The expression زَهْرَةَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا is an accusative of state from the genitive pronoun in بِهٖ. Such accusative of states are common in eloquent Arabic and many examples of it have been pointed out in this exegesis. The implication is that the wealth and resources God has blessed them with are transient. If there is any use of them, then it

is using them to earn for the Hereafter. Its brightness will whither away soon and leave it scarred.

The words لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ refer to the established practice of God. It has been explained under 40 verse of this very *sūrah*. God blesses people with favours in this world and also makes them pass through calamities. When He inflicts them with hardships, the purpose is to test their patience and when He blesses them with favours, the purpose is to test how grateful they are. In other words, if God blessed these groups with favours, it is not because they had a right to them but to try them. If the actual right they have recognized is to show ingratitude, they will soon see its fate.

The words "and your Lord's sustenance is better and lasting" inform the Prophet (sws) that he does not need the patronage of these ingrates for his preaching. What he and his companions will soon receive from God would be a thousand times better and lasting too. What these arrogant people have will last and shine for a few days only but what God will bestow will be everlasting. It will never fade away. It may be noted that the plant of piety grows from the elixir God has revealed for its nourishment. If someone tries to nurture it through stagnant water, then in the first place, it is against its nature to grow because of filthy water and in the second, if it seemingly does grow, then it will bear fruits of vice and not virtue.

وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلٰوةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا ۖ لَا نَسْـَٔلُكَ رِزْقًا ۖ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكَ ۗ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوٰى ﴿١٣٢﴾[119]

The word اَهْل is not used merely for the family of the Prophet (sws). In Arabic, it has a wider connotation. For example, it is used thus in اهل الكتاب، اهل الإنجيل، اهل القرية، اهل الحديث. اهل القرون، اهل الله. It is mentioned in the *Lisān al-'arab*: اهل الرجل أخص الناس به (the expression اهل الرجل refers to people who have a specific relation to a person). It similarly records اهل كل نبى امته (the expression اهل نبى refers to the nation of a prophet).[120] It is narrated from Abu Bakr (rta) that when on the day of Judgement his Lord will ask him as to who he made in charge of the Muslims, he will reply:[121] ولیت علیهم خیر اهلك (I made the best اهل (*ahl*) as the ruler). In verse 55 of Sūrah Maryam, about Ishmael (sws), it is stated: وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُۥ بِالصَّلَوٰةِ وَالزَّكَوٰةِ (He would direct his اهل (*ahl*) to the prayer and the *zakāh*). Obviously, the wife and children cannot be implied by the word اهل (*ahl*) here; all those associated to him are meant.

In the verse under discussion too, the word اهل refers to all those who professed faith in Muḥammad (sws) whether they were specifically related to him or were other

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119. And ask your people to offer prayer and adhere to it yourself also. We do not ask for any sustenance from you. It is We Who shall provide sustenance to you, and success in the end is for piety.

120. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 11, 29.

121. See: Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taymiyah, *Minhāj al-sunnah al-nabawiyyah*, 1st ed., vol. 7 (n.p: Mu'assasah Qurṭubah, 1406 AH). 461.

Muslims regardless of belonging to the Quraysh or the Hashimites or being slaves or free men and women. All these are called اهل of the Prophet (sws). This is because all those who profess faith in a prophet in fact become his family; at the same time, a prophet is concerned about them just as he is concerned about his own family. Deliberation shows how much the use of the word اهل has increased respect and status of poor Muslims. The Almighty included those into the Prophet's family who until then had no one to depend upon.

Thus the verse asks the Prophet (sws) to direct his followers to offer the prayer and adhere to it himself as well. The prayer here refers to the same prayer mentioned in the previous verse: the Prophet (sws) should vigilantly and diligently adhere to it and also ask his followers to the same too so that this creates patience and perseverance. The true meaning of the expression وَ اصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا is that just as a farmer tills his soil, sows deeds, waters it and continues to guard it, the Prophet (sws) too should tend to his land, and then see the blessings it produces. Such will be these blessings they he will feel drenched by them and not need to look up to others in this matter.

The words "it is We Who shall provide sustenance to you" imply that the Almighty will provide livelihood to the Prophet (sws) and his followers and they are not required by Him to make any effort in this regard. He should continue with his task and show vigilance in the prayer and not worry about this. Pointing towards this reality, Jesus (sws) is reported to have said: "The labourer is worthy of his hire." (Luke, 10:7)

Readers must keep the singular pronoun in نَرْزُقُكَ in mind. It was not said: "We will provide for you and your followers." It was said: "We will provide for you." This address to the Prophet (sws) is in his capacity of the head of the Islamic family and its sustainer. When the promise is being made with the head of the family, obviously it is made with the whole of the family ie. all Muslims. In the Islamic political system, the ruler is the provider of his whole Islamic family. For this reason, he is concerned about every individual the way the head of a family is concerned about his wife and kids. If I go into the details of how Abū Bakr (rta) and 'Umar (rta) maintained this standard, the discussion will be prolonged. In current times, we do find many people wailing publicly while grieving for the masses but there are none like 'Umar (rta) who thought that if even in the farthest corners of his kingdom a dog died of hunger, then he was responsible and did not merely express these emotions but took practical steps to prevent this from happening; so much so that this intense sense of accountability made him ignore even his own wife and children.

Consider next the words: "and success in the end is for piety." In the previous part of the verse, promise for worldly sustenance was made; now glad tidings of success in the hereafter are given: none except the pious will succeed.

It may have looked odd to those who are slaves to the apparent that how can the prayer guarantee sustenance for a person. It is true that those who are neither aware of the real essence of the prayer nor aware of those who offer such prayers cannot be

made to understand this; this thing can only be known and felt. Only experience can convince a person about its truth. Only those who taste the true flavour of the prayer know that is concealed in it. Readers should not regard this statement to be a claim made by me. I am not that practicing a Muslim. However, I have seen with my eyes both in real life and in pages of history people whose foreheads gleam with the signs of prostrations. Such is their glitter that they even overshadow the sun's brightness. And such is the extent of their seeking forgiveness of God that the greatest treasures of earth have not the slightest weight before them.

وَقَالُوْا لَوْلَا يَاْتِيْنَا بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ اَوَلَمْ تَاْتِهِمْ بَيِّنَةُ مَا فِي الصُّحُفِ الْاُوْلٰى ﴿۱۳۳﴾[122]

When the Prophet's adversaries would feel helpless and cornered in countering him through arguments, as a last resort, they would demand from a sign of him being God's envoy. A sign would mean a miracle and also the torment that the Qur'ān has promised them in case they deny him. The People of the Book were more responsible for raising this question. Just as in those times they would implant many questions in the minds of the Idolaters whose examples can be seen the previous *sūrahs*, they would also advise them to demand a sign from Muḥammad (sws) just as the previous messengers did so. As per own their knowledge, these People of the Book claimed that the nations of these previous messengers were even inflicted with punishments, so why can't this messenger show such miracles? The Qur'ān has answered this question and while answering it, also kept in consideration those who were implanting it and those also who were presenting it. In this verse, the first group is answered and in the next verse the second.

The answer given to the first group – the People of the Book – is that is this not a sufficient sign for them that the last messenger whose advent was predicted in their scriptures has now come and ratified all these prophecies? I have cited these prophecies in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān. I have also attempted to explain that if Muḥammad (sws) is called an attester of the previous scriptures, it means his advent has ratified all the prophecies made in his favour. This ratification is called بَيِّنَةُ (sign) in this verse.

وَلَوْ اَنَّاۤ اَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ لَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَاۤ اَرْسَلْتَ اِلَيْنَا رَسُوْلًا فَنَتَّبِعَ اٰيٰتِكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ نَّذِلَّ وَنَخْزٰى ﴿۱۳۴﴾[123]

This verse gives an answer while keeping in view the Idolaters. The implication is that in order to do away with their excuse mentioned in the verse, God sent a

122. And they say: "Why does he not bring a sign from his Lord for us?" Has not the testimony of what is written in their earlier scriptures reached them?

123. And if We destroyed them before this through some torment, they would have said: "Lord! Why did You not send a messenger to us that we may have followed Your revelations before being humiliated and disgraced?"

messenger to them. Now the truth has been conclusively communicated to them. If even now they do not profess faith, the very thing they demand will manifest itself.

The words ذلت and خزی are generally used synonymously but when they occur together the way they do here, there is a subtle difference between the two. In this case, ذلت refers to the humiliation which a person feels internally and خزی refers to one which is before others. Their implication was that they would neither have been disgraced before their own selves nor before others.

قُلْ كُلٌّ مُّتَرَبِّصٌ فَتَرَبَّصُوْا ۚ فَسَتَعْلَمُوْنَ مَنْ اَصْحٰبُ الصِّرَاطِ السَّوِيِّ وَمَنِ اهْتَدٰى ﴿١٣٥﴾[124]

This verse sounds the last warning. The last two verses were indirect in their address. In this verse, the address has become direct to express the intensity of anger.

In this verse, because of concomitant indications, the parallel sentence to is suppressed. Examples of such suppression can be seen in earlier *sūrahs*. I have translated the verse accordingly.

With these words, the explanation of this *sūrah* comes to its completion. May God forgive our blemishes and guide us to accept the truth.

Lahore
25th January 1973

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124. Say: Each one is waiting; so, you also wait. Soon you will know who is treading the right path and who the wrong one and who will reach the destination.

Sūrah al-Anbiyā'

Theme and Relationship with the Previous Sūrah

This *sūrah* forms a pair with Sūrah Ṭāhā, the previous *sūrah*. It begins on the same note on which the last *sūrah* ended. In the closing verses of Sūrah Ṭāhā, the disbelievers of the Quraysh were warned that if they insist on seeing a sign of the punishment, then they should wait because the punishment is at hand. Now, this *sūrah* has begun with the same note without any prior introduction: the time of accountability of the Quraysh is now imminent but they are engrossed in frivolties. They mock at the warnings sounded by the Prophet (sws) and make fun of God's revelations. They regard this world to be a place of amusement created to entertain the creator. All their trust hinges on their self-created idols. The fact is that these are figments of their own imagination. Prophets of God have nothing to do with them. In the previous *sūrah*, only the account of Moses (sws) was cited. In this one, accounts of other prophets are also cited. At the same time, the dominance of the truth and the conquest of Makkah are also predicted in an explicit way. This formed a final warning to the disbelievers of the Quraysh and glad tidings for Muslims in the most adverse of circumstances in this conflict between good and evil.

A cursory look at the meanings of the *sūrah* shows that like the previous one, this too consists of three large sections. First the Quraysh are clearly warned of their foolish behaviour that they had adopted with the Prophet (sws). Next, all facts which are reminded and taught by the Qur'ān are highlighted through the anecdotes of previous prophets. At the end, the topic discussed in the opening section is once again taken up in the same vein and the addresses are warned in a very decisive way of the fate they will soon be encountering.

Though this introduction is sufficient to explain the theme and coherence of the *sūrah*, yet for further elucidation presented below is an analysis of the complete meanings.

Analysis of the Meanings

Verses (1-15): The Quraysh are warned that after the advent of God's messenger their accountability is at hand. Instead of seeking a lesson from it, they are foolishly making fun of the Prophet (sws). Some call him a sorcerer, some a magician, some a poet and an imposter and some regard divine revelations to be his wayward dreams. They demand from him similar miracles as the ones worked by previous prophets.

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The fact is that history and people of knowledge bear witness that the content of divine revelation brought by their prophet is no different from that of the previous ones. The reminder they needed for the conclusive communication of the truth has come to them. If they now reject it, they should keep in mind the fate of those nations to whom messengers came and they rejected them. They too disparagingly made fun of their messengers. When as a result, they themselves were seized by God, they could find none to seek refuge with and they were utterly routed.

Verses (16-29): The addressees are reminded that the creator of this universe has not built it to entertain Himself so that truth and falsehood, vice and virtue have the same status. In fact, its creator is just and wise. For this reason, it is essential that He bring about a day in which the truth is victorious and falsehood is vanquished. If anyone thinks that his alleged deities and intercessors will save him from God's punishment, then this is a baseless notion. None shares God's divinity. Everyone submits to Him. If there had been multiple gods of this universe having their own will and intention, it would not have survived. There is not the slightest trace of polytheism in the teachings of God's prophets and messengers. Every prophet has taught monotheism to his followers. If some people think that there are daughters of God who can intercede for them before Him, then this is mere self-deception. Angels are not daughters of God; they are His honourable servants. They cannot even utter a word before Him without His permission and obey His directives. If there is anyone who claims to be a partner of God, he will be consigned to Hell by Him.

Verses (30-33): Some clear signs of the system of this universe are presented before those who were demanding signs. If they really want to see any signs, why do they not reflect on the ones which are present before them all the time and bear witness to the providence, mercy, wisdom and justice of God as well as to the belief in monotheism and to the Day of Judgement? All that the messenger is doing is that he is calling them to these. So when all these signs are substantiating his message, what need is there for a new sign?

Verses (34-43): People who were making fun of the Prophet (sws) are responded to by telling them that he neither is a super human nor a wealthy person. If they want to make fun of the Prophet (sws), they can do so; however, they should remember that when God seizes them, none of their deities – in supporting which they are showing disrespect to God's religion – will be able to help them.

Verses (44-47): The real reason of the arrogance of the arrogant is pointed to. It is predicted that the call of the messenger which they are trying to subvert is reaching Makkah through its whereabouts and soon it will be decided who is victorious. At the same time, it is declared from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that he is warning them through divine revelation but it is falling on deaf ears. If they are seized by God's punishment, then they will gravely regret.

Verses (48-77): Mentioned in an ascending order are the accounts of celebrated prophets like Moses (sws), Abraham (sws) (including Lot (sws), Isaac (sws), Jacob)

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and Noah (sws) with their teachings and the fates of their nations. The purpose was to show that all these prophets preached the same message as the Qur'ān is presenting. Hence those who oppose it will meet no different a fate than those who opposed the previous prophets.

Verses (78-86): In a sequence that highlights character traits, those prophets are mentioned who were put through trials that severely tested their patience and gratitude. All of them succeeded in them. In the first category, by referring to David (sws) and Solomon (sws), the Quraysh are invited to be grateful like these prophets. Among the second category, mention is specially made of Job (sws), Ishmael (sws), Idrīs (sws) and Dhū al-Kifl (sws). The purpose is to encourage Muḥammad (sws) and his oppressed companions that just as God blessed these prophets with His mercy because they showed patience, if they too persevere in the wake of hardships, God will also bless them with His mercy.

Verses (87-91): Those prophets are briefly referred who were miraculously helped by God when they were facing adverse and seemingly hopeless circumstances. The include Jonah (sws), Zacharias (sws), John (sws), Mary (sws) and Jesus (sws). The purpose is to show that when God wants to show mercy to His servants, none can impede His intentions. All means and resources are in His control.

Verses (92-112): This is the concluding part of the *sūrah*. What was stated at its beginning is further emphasized in order to sound assurance to the Prophet (sws) and his companions. They are told that all prophets of God have taught the same message they are preaching. So they should continue with this task and consign the matter of those who have created and are creating differences in it to God. These people will only profess faith when it shall be of no avail. Success of the hereafter is only reserved for pious servants of God. At the end, a decisive declaration is made from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that the time of judgement is at hand. He who wants to gain benefit from this respite should do so because it is now going to end. In the last verse a supplication is made by him to God to judge between him and his foes.

Text and Translation

Section 1: Verses (1-15)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اِقۡتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمۡ وَهُمۡ فِیۡ غَفۡلَةٍ مُّعۡرِضُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۱﴾ مَا یَاۡتِیۡهِمۡ مِّنۡ ذِکۡرٍ مِّنۡ رَّبِّهِمۡ مُّحۡدَثٍ اِلَّا اسۡتَمَعُوۡهُ وَ
هُمۡ یَلۡعَبُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۲﴾ لَاهِیَةً قُلُوۡبُهُمۡ ؕ وَاَسَرُّوا النَّجۡوَی ۖ الَّذِیۡنَ ظَلَمُوۡا ۖ هَلۡ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثۡلُکُمۡ ۚ اَفَتَاۡتُوۡنَ السِّحۡرَ وَ
اَنۡتُمۡ تُبۡصِرُوۡنَ ﴿۳﴾ قٰلَ رَبِّیۡ یَعۡلَمُ الۡقَوۡلَ فِی السَّمَآءِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ۫ وَهُوَ السَّمِیۡعُ الۡعَلِیۡمُ ﴿۴﴾ بَلۡ قَالُوۡۤا اَضۡغَاثُ اَحۡلَامٍ

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بَلِ افْتَرٰىهُ بَلْ هُوَ شَاعِرٌ ۚ فَلْيَاْتِنَا بِاٰيَةٍ كَمَآ اُرْسِلَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ ﴿۵﴾ مَآ اٰمَنَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَا ۚ اَفَهُمْ
يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۶﴾ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوْحِيْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ فَسْـَٔلُوْٓا اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۷﴾ وَمَا
جَعَلْنٰهُمْ جَسَدًا لَّا يَاْكُلُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ وَمَا كَانُوْا خٰلِدِيْنَ ﴿۸﴾ ثُمَّ صَدَقْنٰهُمُ الْوَعْدَ فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُمْ وَمَنْ نَّشَآءُ وَ
اَهْلَكْنَا الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿۹﴾ لَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكُمْ كِتٰبًا فِيْهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ ۭ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۰﴾ وَكَمْ قَصَمْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ كَانَتْ
ظَالِمَةً وَّاَنْشَاْنَا بَعْدَهَا قَوْمًا اٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿۱۱﴾ فَلَمَّآ اَحَسُّوْا بَاْسَنَآ اِذَا هُمْ مِّنْهَا يَرْكُضُوْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ لَا تَرْكُضُوْا وَارْجِعُوْٓا اِلٰى
مَآ اُتْرِفْتُمْ فِيْهِ وَمَسٰكِنِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْـَٔلُوْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾ قَالُوْا يٰوَيْلَنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۴﴾ فَمَا زَالَتْ تِّلْكَ دَعْوٰىهُمْ حَتّٰى
جَعَلْنٰهُمْ حَصِيْدًا خٰمِدِيْنَ ﴿۱۵﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

For people, their time of accountability has drawn near. And being negligent they continue to show evasion. Whatever fresh reminder comes to them from their Lord, they listen to it while only making fun of it. Their hearts are engrossed in heedlessness. And these unjust, silently whispered to another: "He is only a mortal like you; then will you be fooled by his magic with your open eyes?" (1-3)

He said: "My Lord knows every word that is uttered in the heavens and the earth and He hears and knows all." (4)

In fact, they said: "These are wayward dreams; in fact he has fabricated it from himself; in fact, he is a mere poet. Thus let him bring a sign to us the way earlier messengers had been sent with signs." (5)

Before them, none of the people of the settlements We destroyed professed faith; so, will they profess faith? And before you, whichever messenger We sent, We have sent him from among human beings to whom We would send revelations. So, ask men of knowledge if you people do not know. And We did not give these messengers such bodies that they would not consume food and they were also not ones who would live forever. Then We fulfilled Our promise with them and saved them and those We want and We destroyed those who exceeded the limits. (6-9)

And We have also revealed a Book to you which has your share of reminder. Then do you not understand? And how many cities We destroyed whose inhabitants were unjust to themselves, and after them raised other people. Thus when they heard the sound of Our torment, they began to run away from there. We said: "Do not run away now and return to your resources you were rejoicing in and to your very houses so that you may be questioned." They raised a hue and cry: "Alas! Our misfortune; indeed, it is we who were unjust." They kept raising this hue and cry until We reduced them to straws and ashes. (10-15)

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Explanation

اِقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ وَهُمْ فِيْ غَفْلَةٍ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ۚ﴿۱﴾[1]

This *sūrah* has begun without any prior introduction. The reason, as we have already pointed out, is that it actually is a completion of the subject of warning on which the previous *sūrah* ended. Their opening and closing verses perfectly dove-tail into one another. In the explanation of Sūrah al-Tawbah, the benefits of such proximity have been referred to.

The word "people" here refers to the Idolaters of Makkah, as is the opinion of Ibn 'Abbās (rta). Since these people have become adamant on evading God's reminder, they too, while being ignored by Him, are mentioned by a general word. This style signifies aversion and regret. Several examples of it can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*.

The verse does not merely sound a threat; it is a statement of fact. I have been mentioning at various instances in this exegesis to the established practice of the Almighty that when He sends His messenger to a nation, it is only given one option: embrace faith. If this option is not availed, then after conclusive communication of the truth, it is necessarily wiped out. While referring precisely to this practice, after the advent of the messenger and after his preaching, the day of accountability of the Idolaters has drawn very near. However, they are engrossed in negligence and continuing to evade the reminders and warnings of the messenger. Here two of their states are simultaneously mentioned: negligence and evasion. Negligence which refers to indifference to the realities of life in itself is a reason for the doom of a person and a great crime. However, this crime becomes manifold when a servant of God is trying his utmost to shake and jolt people from their slumber, but they insist on their negligence and are not willing to pay heed.

مَا يَاْتِيْهِمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ مُّحْدَثٍ اِلَّا اسْتَمَعُوْهُ وَهُمْ يَلْعَبُوْنَ ۙ﴿۲﴾[2]

In verse 115 of Sūrah Ṭāhā, it is similarly stated: وَكَذٰلِكَ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَّصَرَّفْنَا فِيْهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيْدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُوْنَ اَوْ يُحْدِثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا (and similarly, We have revealed this in the form of an Arabic Qur'ān and have mentioned My warning in it in various ways so that these people remain secure from God's wrath or it may revive My reminder in them). The implication is that God has not stopped at sounding a reminder to them just once. In fact, in order to awaken them from their slumber of negligence, He has continued to send fresh reminders. However, instead of paying heed and duly valuing them, they made fun of every reminder.

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1. For people, their time of accountability has drawn near. And being negligent they continue to show evasion.

2. Whatever fresh reminder comes to them from their Lord, they listen to it while only making fun of it.

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لَاهِيَةً قُلُوْبُهُمْ ؕ وَاَسَرُّوا النَّجْوَى ۖ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ۖ هَلْ هٰذَآ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ ۚ اَفَتَاْتُوْنَ السِّحْرَ وَاَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُوْنَ ۝[3]

The expression لَاهِيَةً قُلُوْبُهُمْ is a second accusative of state (*ḥāl*). The implication is that the real task of the heart is to reflect and receive reminder. However, such are these people that their hearts are so engrossed in their interest that the most serious of statements and the greatest of realities are made fun of by them.

Mentioned in this verse is the propaganda of the Quraysh which they would spread in their gatherings against the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws) to reduce their impact among their people. They had fully realized that the Qur'ān was taking roots in the hearts of people and upright people were being influenced by it. In order to reduce this impact, they would implant this suggestion in their hearts that they should not think that if he presenting such a forceful discourse, then it is from God; he is a mortal like them and if God had to send a messenger, He would have selected someone from the angels or from someother species and not from among human beings. They would further tell them that the eloquence, fluency and potency they see in the Book he is presenting are the result of this person's magical word power they have often witnessed among their own orators and poets. They would then tell them that in the wake of this, it would be very naïve of them that in spite of knowing this they still get caught in the spell weaved by him.

Since leaders invent such pranks and then furtively spread them, the Qur'ān has called it "whispering." By the words "these unjust" it is further pointed out that the perpetrators of this whispering are people who have been unjust to their souls by sealing their own intellectual powers and also being unjust to others by fooling them.

The word "magic" in "will you be fooled by his magic" refers to the words of the divine revelation the Prophet (sws) would recite before them. The Arabs would regard all powerful and moving words and discourses as magic. This use is evident in other languages as well. As far as the eloquence and splendour of the Qur'ān and the sayings of the Prophet (sws) are concerned, its adversaries could not dare deny it. They were compelled to accept it. However, they wanted to let the masses know that its efficacy and impact was not because it was from God. It was merely a magic of words and they should not be lured by it when they know its origin. The words "with your open eyes" is meant to incite a sense of superiority in them: they are not simpletons; they are men of understanding and hence must not be misled.

قٰلَ رَبِّيْ يَعْلَمُ الْقَوْلَ فِي السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۖ وَهُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ۝[4]

This verse describes the response of the Prophet (sws) to the nonsensical behaviour

3. Their hearts are engrossed in heedlessness. And these unjust, silently whispered to another: "He is only a mortal like you; then will you be fooled by his magic with your open eyes?"

4. He said: "My Lord knows every word that is uttered in the heavens and the earth and He hears and knows all."

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of his opponents. He knew that these pranks were being played by those who were fully convinced of the veracity of the Qur'ān. They were creating all this mischief to mislead people. For this reason, without addressing these people, the Prophet consigned his matter to the Lord of the heavens and the earth Who hears and knows all. The implication is that wherever these conspiracies are being hatched, they were fully known to Him. So when He knows, He will come to the rescue of His believers.

بَلْ قَالُوْٓا اَضْغَاثُ اَحْلَامٍ بَلِ افْتَرٰىهُ بَلْ هُوَ شَاعِرٌ ۚ فَلْيَاْتِنَا بِاٰيَةٍ كَمَآ اُرْسِلَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ ۝[5]

The word اَضْغَاثُ is the plural of ضِغْثٌ. The latter means a handful of dry and wet grass. From here originated the idiom اَضْغَاثُ اَحْلَامٍ which means "wayward dreams," or dreams which are absolutely devoid of any meaning and because of their ambiguity are not worthy of any interpretation or given importance to.

The verse implies that these people did not stop at dubbing divine revelations as magic. They went on to call them as wayward dreams and fabrications. They regarded the Prophet (sws) to be a poet and demanded that if he is from God, then he should verify his claim through some sign similar to the ones presented by earlier prophets.

The Prophet (sws) presented the Qur'ān as divine revelation received from Gabriel, a favoured angel of God and was not from his own self. When his opponents saw that this claim of his further increased the importance of the Qur'ān and people were actually being led to believe him, they started to say that this claim was a mere figment of his imagination. He sees wayward dreams. Whatever thoughts he has in his mind are seen by him in his dreams and he wrongly presents them as divine revelation received through an angel in order to deceive people. It may be noted that many anti-religious elements of current times are of the same opinion. They create doubt in divine revelations. The only difference is that the ignorant Arabs of those times expressed their opinion in rather unrefined words while these pseudo intellectuals try to present it as a whole philosophy. I will discuss this in detail *insha'Allāh* while explaining the *sūrahs* of the last chapter of the Qur'ān.

The words بَلِ افْتَرٰىهُ say that they also regard this Qur'ān to be a concoction which the Prophet (sws) wrongly ascribes to God.

The words بَلْ هُوَ شَاعِرٌ imply that the Prophet (sws) is a poet and the forceful nature of his discourse is similar to the one found in the composition of their own poets and orators. In other words, they meant that there is no need to give his discourse any more importance than this. It may be kept in mind that the Arabs were of the view that every great poet was accompanied with jinn who inspired him with poetry. By regarding the Prophet (sws) to be a poet, the want to mislead people into believing

5. In fact, they said: "These are wayward dreams; in fact he has fabricated it from himself; in fact, he is a mere poet. Thus let him bring a sign to us the way earlier messengers had been sent with signs."

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that he too was accompanied by his jinn who authored the words he presented.

One thing that is very evident from this response of the Qur'ān's adversaries was that they were deeply over-awed by its splendour and majesty and had fully understood that it was difficult to dispense with this awe from the hearts of the masses. All that they could do was to try to undermine its status by making people believe that it was not from God and was a human production.

After the expression كَمَآ اُرْسِلَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ the word بِالْاٰيٰتِ is suppressed due to concomitant indications. The implication is that when they would think that these foolish measures are not going to be effective, they would say that if this person is a messenger, then he too should bring signs the way previous messengers did. By "signs" they meant miracles or signs of torment which have been mentioned in the accounts of the previous messengers. According to their claim, this strategem was the most effective in opposing the Prophet (sws) because the call of the Qur'ān was entirely based on arguments drawn from the world around human beings and that within them as well as on human nature and intellect. Instead of showing miracles and signs of punishment, the Qur'ān would urge people to use their insight and intellect because the natural path that reaches faith is through the heart and intellect. Those who do not use their intellect and insight do not profess faith even after seeing miracles and the faith of those who accept it after seeing a sign of punishment has no significance. This claim of the Qur'ān was absolutely true but the opponents would regard it to be an evasion on the part of the Prophet (sws) and lead people astray. They would say that if he was really God's messenger, it would have been very easy for him to fulfil their demand; however, since he was evading it, so he is falsely claiming to be a prophet of God.

مَآ اٰمَنَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَا ۚ اَفَهُمْ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۶﴾[6]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws). He is advised to ignore the foolish behaviour of these people. They are showing the same obduracy and stubbornness which the doomed nations of the past showed. Just as they rejected their messengers and were destroyed by God, in a similar way, destruction is now destined for these people too. When they have not professed faith after seeing signs of all kinds, how can the Prophet (sws) expect them to profess faith if according to their demand they are shown another sign. They will continue to be blind and deaf to all this.

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوْحِيْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ فَسْـَٔلُوْٓا اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۷﴾[7]

In verses 3, an objection of the opponents of the Prophet (sws) is cited: why has

6. Before them, none of the people of the settlements We destroyed professed faith; so, will they profess faith?

7. And before you, whichever messenger We sent, We have sent him from among human beings to whom We would send revelations. So, ask men of knowledge if you people do not know.

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God sent a prophet from among human beings? This verse answers this objection by saying that this is not the first instance that God has sent a human being as a messenger. All messengers before Muḥammad (sws) were human beings as well. The distinction messengers have is not that they are super human; it is rather that they receive divine revelation the way he is receiving it and he sees people uttering nonsense in opposing it.

Consider next the last part of the verse: فَسْـَٔلُوْٓا اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ. The first part directly addresses the Prophet (sws). Now this part directly addresses his adversaries. The reference in it is to the People of the Book who were fully acquainted with the history of prophets. Making them as witnesses was tantamount to making an enemy as witness. This is because by that time, as has become evident from previous *sūrahs*, the People of the Book in their collective capacity had become very prominent in supporting the Quraysh against the Prophet (sws). By making them as witnesses, the Qur'ān has left the Quraysh with no excuse. Their supporters who are also enemies of the Prophet (sws) cannot deny this fact. They can ask them. Here the People of the Book are called "men of knowledge" and not by their common name. The eloquence found in it is that if these People of the Book have become blind in their enmity with the Prophet (sws), nothing much can be done, but those of them who remember the history of their prophets will not dare deny this fact.

The words "if you people do not know" is a sarcastic remark on the Quraysh: though they, as the progeny and claimants to Abraham's religion, know that both Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) were human beings and not super humans; however, if because of being unlettered they have forgotten this fact, they should refresh themselves of it by asking the People of the Book. All messengers that have come were all human beings. None of them were angels.

وَمَا جَعَلْنٰهُمْ جَسَدًا لَّا يَاْكُلُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ وَمَا كَانُوْا خٰلِدِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾[8]

The verse implies that all these previous prophets had the same human features and traits which these people have. They would eat and drink like human beings and die.

This objection is cited at another instance in the following words:

مَا هٰذَآ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ ۙ يَاْكُلُ مِمَّا تَاْكُلُوْنَ مِنْهُ وَيَشْرَبُ مِمَّا تَشْرَبُوْنَ وَلَىِٕنْ اَطَعْتُمْ بَشَرًا مِّثْلَكُمْ اِنَّكُمْ اِذًا لَّخٰسِرُوْنَ

He is but a mortal like you. He eats what you eat and drinks what you drink. If you accept a human being to be a messenger, you shall be in great loss. (22:33-34)

The words وَمَا كَانُوْا خٰلِدِيْنَ refute this claim of theirs that a messenger should be immortal.

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8. And We did not give these messengers such bodies that they would not consume food and they were also not ones who would live forever.

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In verses 34-35 ahead this refutation is made in these words: وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِبَشَرٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ الْخُلْدَ ۖ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَآئِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ. اَفَاْئِنْ مِّتَّ فَهُمُ الْخٰلِدُوْنَ.[9] The implication is that death is an essential phase of this life. It is an inescapable reality. Even prophets of God pass through this phase. This is not something that negatively impacts their responsibility as envoys of God nor is it a means of shame for those who accept them in this status.

ثُمَّ صَدَقْنٰهُمُ الْوَعْدَ فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُمْ وَمَنْ نَّشَآءُ وَاَهْلَكْنَا الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿۹﴾[10]

"Promise" here refers to the same promise which the Almighty has made with His messengers: if people deny them, they will be destroyed by Him and his followers will be saved. While explaining verse 20 of Sūrah Yūnus, I have explained that messengers of God have warned their nations of two torments: one which necessarily visits in this world a nation which denies its messenger and the other one that will be encountered by it in the hereafter. Here the reference is to first of these torments.

The verse implies that these messengers were human beings but history bears witness that the promise God made with them was fulfilled: they and those whom God wanted were salvaged and those who exceeded the limits were destroyed by Him. Here the words مَنْ نَّشَآءُ (whom We want) has made the discourse relevant to the circumstances that prevailed at the time of revelation of this verse. In other words, this law just does not relate to the past; even at this time they are facing this decisive phase. If they invite God's doom because of their stubbornness, only those will be saved whom He wants; none other has any say in this decision and none of these people will escape His grasp.

"Those who exceeded the limits" refer to people who obdurately break the bounds of God and make fun of the warnings of the messenger. These people are regarded as rebels to God and rebels are always punished.

لَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكُمْ كِتٰبًا فِيْهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ ۭ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۰﴾[11]

The verse says that just as God sent messengers to remind previous nations and to conclusively communicate the truth to them before destroying them, God has revealed a Book to the Arabs in which they have been thoroughly reminded. Now they cannot present the excuse before Him that they had not been reminded. There is an essential consequence of this reminder which is destined to materialize. The Qur'ān is not the request of a petitioner that can be rejected by them. Its rejection will result in the same fate of these people as that of the previous nations. God's established practice in this

9. And before you too, We never gave any mortal eternal life. So, if you die, will they remain forever? Each soul will certainly taste the flavour of death.

10. Then We fulfilled Our promise with them and saved them and those We want and We destroyed those who exceeded the limits.

11. And We have also revealed a Book to you which has your share of reminder. Then do you not understand.

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regard will never change. The last part of the verse "then do you not understand" carries a severe reprimand and warning: what has happened to the intellect of these foolish people; why are they calling for their doom.

In order to understand the real emphasis in this verse, readers may look up the explanation of verses 133-145 of Sūrah Ṭāhā.

وَكَمْ قَصَمْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ كَانَتْ ظَالِمَةً وَّ اَنْشَاْنَا بَعْدَهَا قَوْمًا اٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿۱۱﴾[12]

This is a reference to the history of the previous nations: just as the Quraysh are afflicting injustice on their own selves by making fun of God's reminder, many nations before them too have been guilty of the same misconduct and as a result were decimated by God. The implication is that there is no reason that their fate would be any different.

The expression كَانَتْ ظَالِمَةً here means ظَلَمُوْا اَنْفُسَهُمْ ie. God was not unjust to them; they inflicted injustice on their own selves. By sending His messenger, He has informed them of the danger. However, they disregarded this warning because of their own arrogance.

The last part of the verse refers to the fact that replacing one nation with another is not difficult at all for God. None should regard himself to be indispensable for this world so that with his departure the world will become desolate. When a nation takes to rebellion, God will wipe it out and bring another one in its place and judge its actions too. If the Quraysh too follows suit, their fate will ultimately be no different. Whether they are individuals or nations, when they are overcome with negligence in remembering God, they begin to give more than due importance to their own selves. Thus they are told that they must not regard themselves to be superior. Whenever God wants He can wipe them out and bring another nation in their place.

فَلَمَّآ اَحَسُّوْا بَاْسَنَآ اِذَا هُمْ مِّنْهَا يَرْكُضُوْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾[13]

The implication of this verse is that just as today these people are very arrogantly demanding God's torment, nations of the past too did so with great arrogance. However, when the torment did visit them, they could do nothing to avert it and ran away from there. But none can escape God's torment. Once He catches someone, none can run away from Him.

لَا تَرْكُضُوْا وَارْجِعُوْٓا اِلٰى مَآ اُتْرِفْتُمْ فِيْهِ وَمَسٰكِنِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْـَٔلُوْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾[14]

This is a portrayal of the situation. It is as if God's grasp itself is telling them that

12. And how many cities We destroyed whose inhabitants were unjust to themselves, and after them raised other people.

13. Thus when they heard the sound of Our torment, they began to run away from there.

14. We said: "Do not run away now and return to your resources you were rejoicing in and to your very houses so that you may be questioned."

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there is no place to run. The time to escape has expired. They should go and seek refuge in their palaces and forts residing in which they used to make fun of God's revelation and His messenger. Soon they will see their fate. The words "so that you may be questioned" here are to chasten and disgrace them. At occasions of severe anger, this style is often adopted in most languages. At other instances in the Qur'ān too, this sarcastic style has been adopted. Examples include verse 8 of Sūrah al-Takāthur and verse 93 of Sūrah al-Naḥl.

The style in اِلٰى مَآ اُتْرِفْتُمْ فِيْهِ implies that these people were blessed with affluence as a favour from God to test their sense of gratitude. However, they regarded it to be a heritage of their forefathers and the consequence of their own ability as well as something to which they had a right to. On its basis, they rebelled against the very God Who had blessed them with these favours. So, now they should taste the flavour of this misconduct. Here since the address is to the affluent and because مَسٰكِنَ is mentioned after mentioning the resources of luxury, it would refer to their halls and palaces.

قَالُوْا يٰوَيْلَنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ فَمَا زَالَتْ تِّلْكَ دَعْوٰىهُمْ حَتّٰى جَعَلْنٰهُمْ حَصِيْدًا خٰمِدِيْنَ ﴿١٥﴾[15]

The verse implies that it was only after these people had been caught up in the torment that they realized what had happened and began blaming themselves. They had afflicted injustice on their own self. I have already referred to this meaning of "injustice" in verse 11. They had to confess this because God's messenger had fully warned them of this torment but they continued to be deaf and blind. In fact, they stubbornly demanded its arrival. When it finally came, they had to admit that the fault was entirely theirs.

The word دَعْوٰى means "raising a hue and cry and pleading." Here it refers to the same wailing which is mentioned in the previous verse. In other words, they continued to raise a hue and cry but their wailings were of no benefit to them because once the torment arrives nothing is of avail. Thus God rendered them into "severed grass and extinguished ashes. What is concealed in this metaphor is that just as after grass being cut, its dry mounds are set on fire and it becomes a heap of ashes, in a similar way, these people will become dust and ashes. The word خٰمِدِيْنَ occurs in deference to the entity for which the metaphor is stated (grass in this case) and this is a common style of Arabic.

Section II: Verses (16-29)

Coming up is an argument for what is stated earlier: the reason that nations are held accountable in this world and in the next is that God has created this world for the

15. They raised a hue and cry: "Alas! Our misfortune; indeed, it is we who were unjust." They kept raising this hue and cry until We reduced them to straws and ashes.

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manifestation of His mercy and justice and not for His amusement. The necessary consequence of this mercy and justice is that people should not live in negligence and that this world will not go on like this. A day of accountability will come in which those people will be rewarded who led their lives while being obedient to the creator of this world, and those who created anarchy in it be punished. If this world continues without any such day of accountability, it would mean that its creator is someone non-serious who has created this world for his entertainment and has no concern with good and evil or justice and injustice. This notion is an obvious farce and totally against the attributes of justice and mercy of God. Hence, the advent of judgement day is inevitable. In this regard, polytheism is also refuted. This is because if its possibility is accepted, then in this case too this world becomes a place of amusement and entertainment. This is because if intercessors and deities exist who share governance with God to the extent that they can save their worshippers from His grasp whatever they deeds may be, then the day of judgement is just a mockery. It would mean that even of this day of accountability comes, no one should be worried. Intercession can save the day for which their own deities are enough.

Readers may proceed to study the verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَآءَ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لٰعِبِيْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ لَوْ اَرَدْنَآ اَنْ نَّتَّخِذَ لَهْوًا لَّاتَّخَذْنٰهُ مِنْ لَّدُنَّآ ۖ اِنْ كُنَّا
فٰعِلِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهٗ فَاِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ ۭ وَلَكُمُ الْوَيْلُ مِمَّا تَصِفُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَلَهٗ مَنْ فِي
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهٗ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهٖ وَلَا يَسْتَحْسِرُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ يُسَبِّحُوْنَ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا
يَفْتُرُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ اَمِ اتَّخَذُوْٓا اٰلِهَةً مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ هُمْ يُنْشِرُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ لَوْ كَانَ فِيْهِمَآ اٰلِهَةٌ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ لَفَسَدَتَا ۚ فَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ
رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ لَا يُسْـَٔلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْـَٔلُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ اَمِ اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اٰلِهَةً ۭ قُلْ هَاتُوْا
بُرْهَانَكُمْ ۚ هٰذَا ذِكْرُ مَنْ مَّعِيَ وَذِكْرُ مَنْ قَبْلِيْ ۭ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ الْحَقَّ فَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا
مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا نُوْحِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنَا فَاعْبُدُوْنِ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهٗ ۭ بَلْ
عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ لَا يَسْبِقُوْنَهٗ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِاَمْرِهٖ يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا
يَشْفَعُوْنَ ۙ اِلَّا لِمَنِ ارْتَضٰى وَهُمْ مِّنْ خَشْيَتِهٖ مُشْفِقُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَمَنْ يَّقُلْ مِنْهُمْ اِنِّىْٓ اِلٰهٌ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ فَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِيْهِ
جَهَنَّمَ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾

And We have not created the heavens and the earth and what is between them for amusement. Had We wanted to create amusement, We would have arranged for it

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around Ourselves, if this was Our intention. In fact We shall strike falsehood with the truth; so it shall shatter its head. Then you will see that is destined to be annihilated. And there is great devastation for you because of the words you say. (16-18)

And to Him belong what is in the heavens and the earth and those who are in His presence, they do not desist from worshipping Him nor do they get tired. They glorify Him day and night and do not stop. (19-20)

Have they set up separate deities for the earth; they make it lush? Had there been other deities besides God in both of them, both would have been devastated. So, God, master of the throne, is exalted from what they say. Whatever He does, He is not answerable to anyone for it and all these are answerable. Have they set up other deities besides God? Tell them: Bring forth your proof. This is the teaching of those who are with me and of those also who were before me. In fact, most of them do not know the truth. For this reason, they continue to show aversion. And whichever messengers We sent before you, We only kept sending them this revelation: "There is no deity except I; so, worship Me only." (21-25)

And they say: "The Merciful God has children." He is exalted from this blame. In fact, they are favoured servants of God. They do not take the initiative in speaking to Him. They only obey His directive. Whatever is in front of them and behind them is all in His knowledge. And they will not intercede for anyone except for whom God pleases and keep trembling with His awe. And whoever among them claims: "I am a deity besides God," We shall punish him with Hell. Thus will We punish the unjust. (26-29)

Explanation

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَآءَ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لٰعِبِيْنَ ﴿۱۶﴾[16]

What is said earlier regarding the necessity of reward and punishment is substantiated here. If there is no day of judgement after this world; it will continue like this the way it already has; whether a person is just or unjust is no matter of concern for his creator – if this is true, then it would mean that its creator has only made this world for his enjoyment; as long as he wants to, he will continue to do so and once he gets bored, he will dismantle it and make a new form of entertainment to amuse himself. The verse implies that this universe by its very existence testifies that it has been made by a just and wise, merciful and gracious creator and is not a place of amusement or the battle ground of Greek gods or a fairy tale. Every entity of this universe bears witness that its Creator has made it with a great purpose and objective. The obvious consequence of His justice and wisdom is that a day come when this objective will manifest itself.

16. And We have not created the heavens and the earth and what is between them for amusement.

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لَوْ اَرَدْنَآ اَنْ نَّتَّخِذَ لَهْوًا لَّاتَّخَذْنٰهُ مِنْ لَّدُنَّآ ۖ اِنْ كُنَّا فٰعِلِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾[17]

The verse says that in the first place such play and amusement is against God's majesty and His high attributes; however, had this been His plan, He could have made something around Him. There was no need to involve human beings and other creatures in this. It is known that Roman emperors would unleash lions on their innocent slaves in their theatres to amuse themselves with this savagery. No different an opinion can, God forbid, be formed about the creator of this universe if He is witnessing the helplessness of His creatures after making them undergo trials. This world obviously has all kinds of people: the oppressed and the oppressors, the rebels and the submissive, the grateful and the ungrateful, sincere and mean. If all these people are not held accountable on a day of judgement, it would only mean that this world too is a theatre of Roman emperors. This verse refutes this fact. The relationship of God with His creatures necessitates the advent of a Judgement day in which the truth prevails and evil is eliminated. In the absence of this judgement, the world becomes a place of amusement and this is against the attributes of God too.

The verse goes on to state that if God wanted to create some sporting activity, He did not need to create this world. There was no need for Him to create a place in which there was an eternal conflict between Adam's progeny and Satan, truth and falsehood, good and evil, justice and injustice, the oppressor and the oppressed. He could have created something in His own presence. It is against God's justice and mercy that He create such a place of conflict for His creatures and becomes a spectator to their travails. It is against these attributes that He not reward those who succeed in this struggle and not punish those who spend all their lives in serving and supporting evil.

The last part of the verse "if this was Our intention" are meant to dispel this erroneous conception about God. It may be kept in mind that it is because of this conception that the polytheistic nations of this world regarded this universe to be a place of conflict between gods and goddesses and Hindu philosophers dubbed it as a fairytale of their supreme God. Because they had no clear concept about the hereafter, they reckoned that just as the kings of the world build theatres for their recreation, their own deities too have created this world to amuse themselves by making some as the oppressors and others as the oppressed and some as assassins and others as the assassinated. The atheists and non-believers of today though do not express this in words as it is quite repulsive, yet this evil concept is lodged in their minds too. This is because rejecting the hereafter in fact means that this world is a place of recreation. Without acknowledging the hereafter. this world cannot be regarded to be a place based on truth and justice. Both are counterparts that form a pair. If any of the

17. Had We wanted to create amusement, We would have arranged for it around Ourselves, if this was Our intention.

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counterparts is disregarded, the other cannot have an explanation based on wisdom.

بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ ۚ وَلَكُمُ الْوَيْلُ مِمَّا تَصِفُونَ ﴿١٨﴾[18]

The verb يَدْمَغُ means to strike and injure someone in a way that it opens up the brain.

The verse implies that if these people regard this world to be a place of amusement, then this is a baseless notion. If evil has been given respite in it along with the truth by the Almighty, it is not because both are equal. His purpose is to judge people as to who adopt the truth and who adhere to evil. Ultimately the hammer of truth is going to shatter evil into pieces and just as a decisive blow on the brain gives immediate death to a person, this decisive blow will decimate evil in no time.

The last part of the verse implies that the only consequence of the nonsense they are uttering today is devastation and destruction. The words "the words you say" refer to their view that this world is a place of sport and recreation as well as to their concept of polytheism and intercession in the hereafter. It was because of this latter concept that they had no fear of the hereafter as they reckoned that if ever the hereafter comes, their deities and intercessors will save them from every danger. All these concepts and beliefs they hold will lead them to destruction.

وَلَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَلَا يَسْتَحْسِرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتُرُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾[19]

The earlier verses argue in favour of reward and punishment on the basis of God's attributes. Coming up now is a mention of monotheism. The purpose is to explain that utterly wrong are those who think that their deities and intercessors can save them from God's punishment. All that is in the heavens and the earth are His creatures and servants and have no position of authority with God.

The words "and those who are in His presence" refer to the favoured angels of God. They too belong to God. In spite of being close to Him, they never cease from worshipping Him nor ever get tired of it. This is a refutation of the belief of the Idolaters who would worship these angels by considering them to be daughters of God. They reckoned that these angels had a high status before God and also had their way with Him; their desires and wishes were always honoured by Him. These idolaters regarded their own worldly favours to be a gift of these angels. Regarding the hereafter they thought that if ever they are resurrected, then will reap a high status

18. In fact, We shall strike falsehood with the truth; so it shall shatter its head. Then you will see that is destined to be annihilated. And there is great devastation for you because of the words you say.

19. And to Him belong what is in the heavens and the earth and those who are in His presence, they do not desist from worshipping Him nor do they get tired. They glorify Him day and night and do not stop.

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there too because of these angels.

The verse says that these people show arrogance on their basis whereas they themselves neither cease from worshipping Him nor ever feel worn-out in this act. They constantly glorify and exalt God and not stop for a moment.

اَمِ اتَّخَذُوْٓا اٰلِهَةً مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ هُمْ يُنْشِرُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ لَوْ كَانَ فِيْهِمَآ اٰلِهَةٌ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ لَفَسَدَتَا ۚ فَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾[20]

The expression أنشر اللّٰه الارض means "God revived the earth and made it lush and green after it had become dry and desolate." Thus in Sūrah al-Zukhruf, the words are:

وَالَّذِيْ نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءًۢ بِقَدَرٍ ۚ فَاَنْشَرْنَا بِهٖ بَلْدَةً مَّيْتًا (۴۳:۱۱)

And Who sent down water from the heavens in a certain measure. Thus We revived through it a dry land. (43:11)

This verse refutes another idolatrous notion of the polytheists. Many of them thought that the heavens and the earth had separate deities. They did believe in one God of the throne but they thought that He was sitting on His throne in the heavens. As for the earth, it had different deities. As a result of this belief, they would worship their earthly deities while disregarding the God of the heavens. If we study the history of idol worship of the Arabs, we come to know that they thought that since the earth was a very far of area in the territory of the God of the throne, its governance had been entrusted by Him to others and He Himself had become aloof of it. The verse refutes this baseless notion. If the heavens and the earth had separate deities, both would have been devastated. What was the need for the One in the heavens to rain down water on the earth after it had become dry and barren or arrange for other needs of its inhabitants? The verse implies that there exists great harmony among diverse elements of nature. If even for a moment this harmony is compromised, the whole system of the universe will be dismembered. This harmony shows that it is governed by a single mind. If it had been governed by multiple minds, the heavens and the earth could not have remained intact.

The words "so, God, master of the throne, is exalted from what they say" state the consequence of the argument just cited in favour of monotheism. The concept they have about God is totally foolish. When He is the master of the throne, then it is His directive which prevails both in the heavens and the earth. In this scenario, how can others be supposed to interfere in His plans of governance?

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20. Have they set up separate deities for the earth; they make it lush? Had there been other deities besides God in both of them, both would have been devastated. So, God, master of the throne, is exalted from what they say.

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لَا يُسْـَٔلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَ هُمْ يُسْـَٔلُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾[21]

In this verse, the Almighty has explained His majesty: He is not accountable to anyone; all else whether they are angels or human beings are accountable to Him. No one can dare disobey Him, and if some tries to, he will be taken to task. This verse actually refutes the notion of the idolaters who regarded their deities to have a role in the governance of this universe. They thought that they had enough influence on God to make Him change His decision and could act independently without anyone questioning them.

اَمِ اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖۤ اٰلِهَةً ؕ قُلْ هَاتُوْا بُرْهَانَكُمْ ۚ هٰذَا ذِكْرُ مَنْ مَّعِيَ وَ ذِكْرُ مَنْ قَبْلِيْ ؕ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ الْحَقَّ فَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿۲۴﴾ وَ مَاۤ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا نُوْحِيْۤ اِلَيْهِ اَنَّهٗ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّاۤ اَنَا فَاعْبُدُوْنِ ﴿۲۵﴾[22]

These verses present historical evidence in favour of monotheism and refutation of polytheism. This is a separate category of evidence distinct from the evidence presented earlier regarding the harmony in diverse elements of nature. For this reason, the question "have they set up other deities besides God?" is repeated. The reason that the advocates of polytheism are asked to present evidence in favour of their belief is that as far as God is concerned, there is no difference of opinion regarding Him. They believed in Him and thus He was an established reality. As for the claim that there are other deities besides Him, it needs proof and the onus of this proof lies with its claimants. If they have any such proof, they should present it.

The words "this is the teaching of those who are with me and of those also who were before me" highlight the fact that in the Qur'ān is enshrined the teaching given to the Prophet (sws) and his followers and also the teaching given to previous prophets. All have taught the belief of monotheism. None have ever taught polytheism. If they have any evidence to the contrary, they should bring it.

The words "in fact, most of them do not know the truth; for this reason, they continue to show aversion" reflect that it is not that these people have any proof on the basis of which they are opposing monotheism and vehemently supporting polytheism. It is their ignorance and lack of knowledge of the truth that is making them show aversion and refusal. These words also sound assurance to the Prophet (sws) and his followers that he should not be aggrieved by their attitude: when his opposition is not based on proof and reason and is entirely based on ignorance and oblivion, how can

21. Whatever He does, He is not answerable to anyone for it and all these are answerable.

22. Have they set up other deities besides God? Tell them: Bring forth your proof. This is the teaching of those who are with me and of those also who were before me. In fact, most of them do not know the truth. For this reason, they continue to show aversion. And whichever messengers We sent before you, We only kept sending them this revelation: "There is no deity except I; so, worship Me only."

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there be any remedy to this.

The verse وَمَآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا مِنۡ قَبۡلِكَ مِنۡ رَّسُوۡلٍ اِلَّا نُوۡحِىۡۤ اِلَيۡهِ اَنَّهٗ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّاۤ اَنَا فَاعۡبُدُوۡنِ cited above is actually an explanation of "this is the teaching of those who are with me." An incomplete verb is suppressed before نُوۡحِىۡۤ. It should be kept in mind that the though there has been a lot of interpolations in the previous scriptures, but the teaching of monotheism is even today preserved in them. If their recipients adopted polytheism, it was because of their own wayward philosophies and not on the basis of their teaching. Just as in spite of the Qur'ān having very clear teachings of monotheism, its followers have been inflicted with various forms of polytheism, similarly, these nations adopted the curse of polytheism against the monotheism mentioned in their scriptures. Then they tried to furnish external reasoning to support it. The teachings of the Torah, the Gospel and the Psalms have been referred to in this exegesis earlier. In the Torah, the teachings of Abraham (sws) are also found. It is based entirely on monotheism. In short, all available record of previous scriptures corroborates the claim of the Qur'ān that every messenger of God preached monotheism. None of them ever preached polytheism. Anyone who makes a contrary claim is totally unaware of the history of the prophets and their preaching.

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وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحۡمٰنُ وَلَدًا سُبۡحٰنَهٗ ؕ بَلۡ عِبَادٌ مُّكۡرَمُوۡنَ ﴿۲۶﴾ لَا يَسۡبِقُوۡنَهٗ بِالۡقَوۡلِ وَهُمۡ بِاَمۡرِهٖ يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۲۷﴾[23]

These verses refute the baseless belief of intercession held by the idolaters. They regard angels to be daughters of God and foolishly think that whatever favours and sustenance they receive in this world is because of them, and if ever there is going to be a judgement day, there too they will reap a high status because of them. This erroneous belief is refuted by saying that if such intercession is accepted, then this would render belief in the hereafter redundant, as has been alluded to earlier. In other words, if bribery and intercession can convert truth into falsehood and vice versa, it would mean that this world is a meaningless place. It is based on injustice and its creator is unjust.

The first verse states that God is far beyond having a wife and children. Such ascriptions are totally against His divinity. Angels are not daughters of God as these foolish people contend; they are His honourable servants. They hold a favoured status with God. However, this status is held by them because they cannot perpetrate evil and are fully devoted to God and worship Him only and not because they can have their say before Him.

The second verse cited above sates that angels cannot even take the initiative in speaking to Him, let alone have an influence on Him or have any special status before

23. And they say: "The Merciful God has children." He is exalted from this blame. In fact, they are favoured servants of God. They do not take the initiative in speaking to Him. They only obey His directive.

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Him. They only speak when they are permitted and reply to whatever they have bee asked in a very respectful way. They do not have the authority to take any step for anyone out of their own accord. They only obey what they are told by God. Thus, if such is the status of these angels, it would be outright foolishness to pin any hopes on them and think that they will secure them from God's grasp and grant them whatever rank they want to.

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يَشْفَعُوْنَ ۙ اِلَّا لِمَنِ ارْتَضٰى وَهُمْ مِّنْ خَشْيَتِهٖ مُشْفِقُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾[24]

The Almighty is well aware of their past, present and future. Hence none can increase or decrease God's knowledge about any of them. Moreover, these angels cannot take any initiative to recommend anyone. They can only recommend those whom God chooses. Furthermore, they continue to tremble with God's fear. Thus there is absolutely no possibility of the fact that they say something against the truth.

The overall implication is that people who have pinned their hopes on their intercession should contemplate all these things and not ruin their future on the basis of a baseless notion.

وَمَنْ يَّقُلْ مِنْهُمْ اِنِّيْٓ اِلٰهٌ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ فَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِيْهِ جَهَنَّمَ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾[25]

The verse points to the fact that whereas these people had given their deities such status that God was merely a pawn in their hands and they could move it wherever they wanted to, their real status is spelled out by this verse. Their fate is Hell and this punishment has been prescribed by God for all polytheists. They too are destined to encounter it. It may be kept in mind that the same threat has been sounded by God to the Christians regarding Jesus (sws) and his mother.

Section III: Verses (30-33)

The previous verses state two arguments in favour of monotheism based on human nature and intellect and on God's attributes. Verse 5 had mentioned people who were demanding signs. Here their attention is directed to signs in the world around them: why do they demand a new sign when this universe is replete with signs of God's providence, power and mercy and of the belief of monotheism and the advent of the hereafter? Why do they not reflect on them? If they have shut their eyes to all these signs, what guarantee is there that that a new sign will open their eyes? The real

24. Whatever is in front of them and behind them is all in His knowledge. And they will not intercede for anyone except for whom God pleases and keep trembling with His awe.

25. And whoever among them claims: "I am a deity besides God," We shall punish him with Hell. Thus will We punish the unjust.

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passage that makes guidance enter the heart is the intellect. When they have blinded their intellect, how can they receive guidance?

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

اَوَلَمۡ يَرَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡۤا اَنَّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضَ كَانَتَا رَتۡقًا فَفَتَقۡنٰهُمَا ؕ وَجَعَلۡنَا مِنَ الۡمَآءِ كُلَّ شَىۡءٍ حَىٍّ ؕ اَفَلَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿۳۰﴾ وَجَعَلۡنَا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ رَوَاسِىَ اَنۡ تَمِيۡدَ بِهِمۡ ۖ وَجَعَلۡنَا فِيۡهَا فِجَاجًا سُبُلًا لَّعَلَّهُمۡ يَهۡتَدُوۡنَ ﴿۳۱﴾ وَجَعَلۡنَا السَّمَآءَ سَقۡفًا مَّحۡفُوۡظًا ۚ وَّهُمۡ عَنۡ اٰيٰتِهَا مُعۡرِضُوۡنَ ﴿۳۲﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىۡ خَلَقَ الَّيۡلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمۡسَ وَالۡقَمَرَ ؕ كُلٌّ فِىۡ فَلَكٍ يَّسۡبَحُوۡنَ ﴿۳۳﴾

Have these disbelievers not seen that the heavens and the earth both are closed. Then We open them and We gave life to everything with water. So, even then are they not accepting faith? And We planted mountains in the earth so that it may not tilt away with them and in these mountains made passes as paths so that they find the way. And We made the heavens a secure roof and they have turned away from its signs. And it is He Who made the night and the day, the sun and the moon. Each of them is moving in a specific path. (30-33)

Explanation

اَوَلَمۡ يَرَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡۤا اَنَّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضَ كَانَتَا رَتۡقًا فَفَتَقۡنٰهُمَا ؕ وَجَعَلۡنَا مِنَ الۡمَآءِ كُلَّ شَىۡءٍ حَىٍّ ؕ اَفَلَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿۳۰﴾[26]

The word كَانَ here is in the same meaning as in كَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيۡماً حَكِيۡماً.

The word رَتۡق means "closed" and فَتۡق means "to open." The implication of the verse is that the heavens are closed and do no not rain down water. Similarly, the earth is closed and no vegetation sprouts from it. Then people see that the heavens open and send down water in abundance. After that, the earth too is made to open and it becomes lush and luxuriant. Hitherto, it was dry and barren; as soon as it was drenched with rain, it sprung to life.

The verse says that why don't those who deny monotheism and the hereafter and demand a sign to make them convinced observe signs that they encounter everyday. It is precisely for his reason that the Almighty has made His signs evident so that people are guided to the right path.

Reflection shows that in this observation are found the arguments presented by the Qur'ān in favour of what it wants its addressees to believe in.

A very clear argument of monotheism is found in it. If the heavens and the earth had

26. Have these disbelievers not seen that the heavens and the earth both are closed. Then We open them and We gave life to everything with water. So, even then are they not accepting faith?

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separate deities, what was the need for the heavens to rain down water to keep bring life to the earth. This harmony found between the two – as if they are pairs – clearly evidences the fact that both have the same creator who controls them.

A second argument found in it is of the hereafter. If a dry and dead piece of land is once again brought back to life, why should being re-created after death be regarded as improbable?

A third argument found in it is that human beings will be held accountable. They should see that God has made such elaborate arrangements to nurture and nourish them. He has put the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon, the clouds and the winds into their service. So how is it possible that He will let them go like this without holding them accountable for these favours.

This subject is discussed in Sūrah Qāf thus:

وَنَزَّلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً مُّبٰرَكًا فَاَنْۢبَتْنَا بِهٖ جَنّٰتٍ وَّحَبَّ الْحَصِيْدِ وَالنَّخْلَ بٰسِقٰتٍ لَّهَا طَلْعٌ نَّضِيْدٌ رِّزْقًا لِّلْعِبَادِ ۙ وَاَحْيَيْنَا بِهٖ بَلْدَةً مَّيْتًا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ الْخُرُوْجُ (٥٠: ٩-١١)

And We sent down blessed water from the sky with which We thence brought forth gardens and the harvest grain and tall palm trees stacked with clusters of dates, as a means of sustenance for people. And through this water, We also revived a dead piece of land. Likewise, shall be the coming out from the graves. (50:9-11)

وَجَعَلْنَا فِي الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ اَنْ تَمِيْدَ بِهِمْ ۪ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيْهَا فِجَاجًا سُبُلًا لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾[27]

The word رَوَاسِيَ is an attribute for mountains and this attribute has become so famous for them that it has assumed the place of the very noun it qualifies. Before the expression اَنْ تَمِيْدَ بِهِمْ a word to the effect كَرَاهِيَةَ is suppressed. The word فِجَاجًا is the plural of فِجٌّ and the latter refers to the space or gap between two mountains.

These spaces and passes have been created for people so that they can travel from one place to another. Had God not provided them with this opportunity, they would have been confined to their own territories and it would not have been possible for anyone travel and do trade.

The words "so that they find the way" mean that people are guided through these pathways as well as that God has made evident His great signs so that their eyes are opened, the majesties of His power, exaltedness and wisdom become clear and they find their way to Him. Unfortunately, human beings are inflicted with this strange blindness that they do not receive guidance from as great a sign as a mountain but if shown a miracle in accordance with their demand, then they will find guidance. How can people see a mole if they are unable to see a mountain?

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27. And We planted mountains in the earth so that it may not tilt away with them and in these mountains made passes as paths so that they find the way.

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In Sūrah Qāf, it is stated:

وَالْاَرْضَ مَدَدْنٰهَا وَاَلْقَيْنَا فِيْهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَاَنْۢبَتْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍۢ بَهِيْجٍ ۙ تَبْصِرَةً وَّ ذِكْرٰى لِكُلِّ عَبْدٍ مُّنِيْبٍ (۵۰: ۷-۸)

And We spread the earth and implanted mountains in it, and brought forth in it all kinds of beautiful things for the insight and reminder for every heedful person. (50:7-8)

It is evident from the last words of the above cited verse that God's real purpose of showing these great signs is that people have insight and they are reminded. However, they can only benefit those who are attentive to them. Those who do not have this ability will remain blind even after seeing everything.

وَجَعَلْنَا السَّمَآءَ سَقْفًا مَّحْفُوْظًا ۚ وَّهُمْ عَنْ اٰيٰتِهَا مُعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾[28]

After pointing towards certain prominent signs of the earth, attention is directed to the perfection in the unbounded expanse of the heavens. They have not the slightest flaw in them. No one knows when this roof was made and even after the passage of time, it has not become decrepit or inflicted with any flaw. It is secure from every fissure and fully intact. In Sūrah Qāf, this aspect is mentioned thus:

اَفَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوْٓا اِلَى السَّمَآءِ فَوْقَهُمْ كَيْفَ بَنَيْنٰهَا وَزَيَّنّٰهَا وَمَا لَهَا مِنْ فُرُوْجٍ (۵۰:۶)

Have they not paid attention to the sky above them? How We have made and adorned it, and it has no fissure in it at any place. (50:6)

In Sūrah al-Mulk, the words are:

الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ طِبَاقًا ؕ مَا تَرٰى فِيْ خَلْقِ الرَّحْمٰنِ مِنْ تَفٰوُتٍ ؕ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ ۙ هَلْ تَرٰى مِنْ فُطُوْرٍ ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ اِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَّهُوَ حَسِيْرٌ

He, Who created seven heavens one above the other. You will not find any fault with what has been created by the Most Gracious. Thus, look about: can you see any flaw? Look again and again. Your look will come back to you worn out and overcome but will not be able to discover any flaw. (67:2-4)

For any more explanation on this subject, readers may consult verse 99 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl and verses 27-33 of Sūrah al-Nāzi'āt. Some exegetes have interpreted the

28. And We made the heavens a secure roof and they have turned away from its signs.

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word "secure" of the verse under discussion to mean that the heavens are secure from the interference of devils. This issue will insha'Allāh be discussed in the explanation of Sūrah al-Mulk.

The words "and they have turned away from its signs" point to the fact that as far as signs are concerned, there is no dearth of them; yet what can they serve such people who have shut their eyes from them.

وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ الَّیْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ؕ كُلٌّ فِیْ فَلَكٍ یَّسْبَحُوْنَ ﴿۳۳﴾[29]

After pointing to the signs of the heavens, attention is directed to some of their prominent signs. Even though the night and the day, the sun and the moon are diverse elements of nature yet they are complementing one another and are in total harmony with one another. This is evidence enough to show that this universe is being government by a single mind which has made these elements serve the collective benefit of the world.

In the sentence "each of them is moving in a specific path" the word "each" refers to the sun and the moon. When the word كُلٌّ (each) occurs in this way, it becomes an instrument for defining a noun and refers to it as mentioned regardless of being two or more. The implication of this sentence is that the sun and the moon dare not deviate from their prescribed paths. If this happens, it will disrupt the whole system of the universe. They follow their course with minute precision and continue to do so with this perfection. This bears evidence to the fact that they obey the master of this universe. It is utter foolishness that in spite of observing these signs in the light of the day and in the darkness of night, people are demanding another sign. Even worse are those who have regarded the sun and the moon as deities even though they by their very existence continuously show that they are submissive.

Section IV: Verses (34-47)

Readers may look up verse 8 earlier. It was stated there that the adversaries make fun of Muḥammad (sws): how can he be God's messenger when he is a human being; he also has no distinction over them in wealth and status. They would further contend that if he has to make them accept his status as a messenger of God, then he should show them a sign that proves his veracity. In the foregoing verses, an answer is given to this demand. Now in the succeeding verses, the Prophet (sws) is being assured that he should ignore their mockery. Time is approaching when they will see the veracity of every claim he is making and all their arrogance will vanish.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

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29. And it is He Who made the night and the day, the sun and the moon. Each of them is moving in a specific path.

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Text and Translation

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِبَشَرٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ الْخُلْدَ ۭ اَفَاْىِٕنْ مِّتَّ فَهُمُ الْخٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَاۗىِٕقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۭ وَنَبْلُوْكُمْ
بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً ۭ وَاِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَاِذَا رَاَكَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ يَّتَّخِذُوْنَكَ اِلَّا هُزُوًا ۭ اَهٰذَا الَّذِيْ يَذْكُرُ
اٰلِهَتَكُمْ ۚ وَهُمْ بِذِكْرِ الرَّحْمٰنِ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ خُلِقَ الْاِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ ۭ سَاُورِيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِيْ فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنِ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَ
يَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا حِيْنَ لَا يَكُفُّوْنَ عَنْ وُّجُوْهِهِمُ النَّارَ وَلَا عَنْ
ظُهُوْرِهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ بَلْ تَاْتِيْهِمْ بَغْتَةً فَتَبْهَتُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ رَدَّهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَلَقَدِ
اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِيْنَ سَخِرُوْا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ قُلْ مَنْ يَّكْلَؤُكُمْ بِالَّيْلِ وَ
النَّهَارِ مِنَ الرَّحْمٰنِ ۭ بَلْ هُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ اَمْ لَهُمْ اٰلِهَةٌ تَمْنَعُهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِنَا ۭ لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ نَصْرَ
اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ مِّنَّا يُصْحَبُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ بَلْ مَتَّعْنَا هٰٓؤُلَاۗءِ وَاٰبَاۗءَهُمْ حَتّٰى طَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ ۭ اَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ اَنَّا نَاْتِي
الْاَرْضَ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ اَطْرَافِهَا ۭ اَفَهُمُ الْغٰلِبُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اُنْذِرُكُمْ بِالْوَحْيِ ۣ وَلَا يَسْمَعُ الصُّمُّ الدُّعَاۗءَ اِذَا مَا
يُنْذَرُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَلَىِٕنْ مَّسَّتْهُمْ نَفْحَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّكَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ يٰوَيْلَنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِيْنَ
الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْـــًٔا ۭ وَاِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ اَتَيْنَا بِهَا ۭ وَكَفٰى بِنَا حٰسِبِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾

And before you too, We never gave any mortal eternal life. So, if you die, will they remain forever? Each soul will certainly taste the flavour of death. And We are trying you people through sorrow and joy as a test and to Us shall be your return. (34-35)

And when these disbelievers look at you, they only make fun of you. They say: "So, is this the one who degrades your deities?" And as for themselves, they even reject the Merciful God's mention. (36)

Impatience is the substance human beings are made of. So I shall soon show you people My signs. Thus do not show haste to Me. And they say: "When will this promise be fulfilled, if you are truthful?" Would that these disbelievers could be aware of the time when they would not be able to shield their faces from the torment of the fire nor from their backs and neither will they be helped from anywhere. In fact, it will suddenly come upon them and terrify them. Neither will they be able to drive it away nor will they be given respite. (37-40)

And before you also, messengers have been mocked. Then those of them who mocked them were surrounded by that which they had been mocking. Ask them: Who is protecting you from the punishment of the most Merciful God by the night and day? In fact, these people are turning away from the warning of their Lord. Do these people have some other deities besides Us which will save them? Neither will they be able to

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help themselves nor would they have any support against Us. (41-43)

In fact, the real thing is that We provided means and resources of the world to them and to their forefathers until a long period passed over them in this situation. Yet, are they not seeing that We are moving towards the land [of Makkah] by diminishing it from its borders. So are these people going to remain dominant? (44)

Say: I am only informing you through revelation, but the deaf do not listen to a call when they are warned. And if even any flare of your Lord's torment touched them, they will call out: "Alas, Our misfortune! Indeed, We were unjust to our souls." (45-46)

And on the Day of Judgement, We shall place the balance of justice. Then not the slightest injustice shall any soul suffer and if a person has a deed of the size of even a mustard seed, We shall bring it forth. And We are sufficient to take account. (47)

Explanation

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِبَشَرٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ الْخُلْدَ ۖ أَفَإِن مِّتَّ فَهُمُ الْخَالِدُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۗ وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً ۖ وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾[30]

In verse 3 earlier, an objection of the disbelievers on Muḥammad (sws) has been cited: why should they believe him to be a prophet when he is a mortal like them who eats and drinks and will ultimately pass away like them. There this objection was answered in a different way. Here once again this objection is taken up and responded to. This time the mental state of those who were raising this objection is criticized. It is stated that eternal life is not a necessary trait of a messenger. The Prophet (sws) is told that before him every human being whether he was a prophet or not met death and in future this will keep happening. None lived forever. If he dies one day, they too will not have an everlasting life. Death is an essential part of every mortal's life. The implication is that this objection could only have carried weight if they themselves had eternal lives. In that case, they could have said that why should immortals believe in a mortal prophet. However, when too are mortal, why do they demand an immortal prophet?

The words "and We are trying you people through sorrow and joy as a test and to Us shall be your return" are an answer to this objection from another angle. Just as they objected to the Prophet (sws) being a human being, they also would say that if God wanted a messenger to be from human beings, He would have selected some affluent person of Makkah or Ṭā'if; why did He choose someone who was poor and had no status. The Qur'ān has answered this question in different ways. Here too it has taken up the answer from a new angle. It is stated that just as it is not essential for a messenger to be a superhuman, it is also not essential that he be a person of wealth

30. And before you too, We never gave any mortal eternal life. So, if you die, will they remain forever? Each soul will certainly taste the flavour of death. And We are trying you people through sorrow and joy as a test and to Us shall be your return.

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and status. In this world, affluence is neither a proof of a person being close to God nor poverty is a sign of him being inferior. Here, affluence and poverty, grief and joy are trials. Through them, the Almighty tests His servants and distinguishes the good from the evil. When He blesses someone with wealth and status, He tests his sense of gratitude. When He makes someone poor, He tests his patience. Then everyone has to return to Him and He will give His final verdict regarding their fate. People who when blessed with wealth think that they are favoured ones of God and go as far as to believe that it is solely their right to become God's messengers are hugely mistaken.

In this verse, al-Zamakhsharī[31] regards the word فِتْنَةً to connote emphasis in the verb. However, in my view, it is an accusative of reason (*maf'ūl lahū*). I have presented my research on this word in the exegesis of Sūrah Ṭāhā.

وَاِذَا رَاٰكَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ يَّتَّخِذُوْنَكَ اِلَّا هُزُوًا ۭ اَهٰذَا الَّذِيْ يَذْكُرُ اٰلِهَتَكُمْ ۚ وَهُمْ بِذِكْرِ الرَّحْمٰنِ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾[32]

This verse points to the style and tone in which these people would make fun of the Prophet (sws). A word to the effect بِالسُّوْءِ is suppressed after the expression يَذْكُرُ اٰلِهَتَكُمْ implying that he mentions them in a degrading way. It was as if the Almighty did not even like to mention the word "degrading" for these idols. The pronoun of address يَذْكُرُ اٰلِهَتَكُمْ in is to incite their masses. They did not say "he degrades our idols." On the contrary, they used the words "he degrades your idols."

The sentence "and as for themselves, they even reject the Merciful God's mention" refers to the fact that they have such a great sense of honour for these idols made from mud that wherever they spot God's Messenger they start teasing him and mocking at him; however, as for the Merciful God – the real deity – they do not even like to hear His mention let alone any sense of honour for Him. It may be kept in mind that people who get incriminated with any form of polytheism, such is their hearts' perversion that their sense of honour for their deities becomes so sharp that they are prepared to fight everyone who points a finger at them; however, for God Almighty, their sense of honour completely vanishes. Such is their insensitivity to it that even if someone abuses Him in front of them, they do not feel any anger.

خُلِقَ الْاِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ ۭ سَاُورِيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِيْ فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنِ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾[33]

The word "human beings" here refers to these people who made fun. Such is their

31. Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 3, 117.

32. And when these disbelievers look at you, they only make fun of you. They say: "So, is this the one who degrades your deities?" And as for themselves, they even reject the Merciful God's mention.

33. Impatience is the substance human beings are made of. So I shall soon show you people My signs. Thus do not show haste to Me. And they say: "When will this promise be fulfilled, if you are truthful?"

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uncouth nature that they are mentioned in a general way. They are told that if there is a delay in God's punishment, it is because of God's grace. He wants people to benefit from this respite by seeking forgiveness and mending their ways; however, human beings are very impatient; instead of benefitting from this period, they seek to hasten God's punishment. After that they are threatened that they should refrain from making haste; very soon they will see signs from God which will persuade them that what the messenger is warning them is destined to come before them in this world as well as the next.

لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا حِيْنَ لَا يَكُفُّوْنَ عَنْ وُّجُوْهِهِمُ النَّارَ وَلَا عَنْ ظُهُوْرِهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾[34]

This verse expresses regret at their attitude. It will lead them to the doom it mentions. They will be helplessly stranded in it.

بَلْ تَاْتِيْهِمْ بَغْتَةً فَتَبْهَتُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ رَدَّهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾[35]

These people are told that they should not ask for its time of arrival because none knows about it. It will suddenly descend upon them.

وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِيْنَ سَخِرُوْا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾[36]

In order to assure the Prophet (sws), historical evidence is cited in this verse. He is facing nothing new and the fate of such people will also will be nothing new.

It is evident from the words "then those of them who mocked them were surrounded by that which they had been mocking" that only those people are destroyed in the decisive torment that visits nations when they deny their messenger that insist on this denial. This established practice of God has been mentioned at various instances in this exegesis.

قُلْ مَنْ يَّكْلَؤُكُمْ بِالَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ مِنَ الرَّحْمٰنِ ؕ بَلْ هُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾[37]

The verse admonishes them: what army do they have to protect themselves from the torment they are arrogantly demanding.

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34. Would that these disbelievers could be aware of the time when they would not be able to shield their faces from the torment of the fire nor from their backs and neither will they be helped from anywhere.

35. In fact, it will suddenly come upon them and terrify them. Neither will they be able to drive it away nor will they be given respite.

36. And before you also, messengers have been mocked. Then those of them who mocked them were surrounded by that which they had been mocking.

37. Ask them: Who is protecting you from the punishment of the most Merciful God by the night and day? In fact, these people are turning away from the warning of their Lord.

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The last part expresses sorrow at their misfortune. Their arrogance stands on a foundation that has no base. It is not that they have made any arrangement to protect themselves from God's torment because of which they are being haughty; they are in fact ignoring God's reminder by being indifferent to their fate.

اَمۡ لَهُمۡ اٰلِهَةٌ تَمۡنَعُهُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِنَا ؕ لَا يَسۡتَطِيۡعُوۡنَ نَصۡرَ اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ وَلَا هُمۡ مِّنَّا يُصۡحَبُوۡنَ ﴿۴۳﴾[38]

It should be kept in mind that the self-made idols of the polytheists were all imaginary. If anyone of them existed, about it the verse states that how can it save others if it cannot even save itself?

بَلۡ مَتَّعۡنَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَاٰبَآءَهُمۡ حَتّٰى طَالَ عَلَيۡهِمُ الۡعُمُرُ ؕ اَفَلَا يَرَوۡنَ اَنَّا نَاۡتِى الۡاَرۡضَ نَنۡقُصُهَا مِنۡ اَطۡرَافِهَا ؕ اَفَهُمُ الۡغٰلِبُوۡنَ ﴿۴۴﴾[39]

This verse refers to the real reason of their arrogance. They think that the respect and authority they have has been inherited by them from their forefathers and thus they are its rightful heirs: they have been born with these favours and they will continue to enjoy them; after them, their progeny will inherit them. This baseless notion made them indifferent to the waning of the messenger and they regarded all his admonitions to be a bluff. There is nothing that can challenge their political authority.

After benefiting from God's favour for a long time, the hearts of these ingrates have hardened. In Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, this is mentioned thus:

وَلَا يَكُوۡنُوۡا كَالَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوا الۡكِتٰبَ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيۡهِمُ الۡاَمَدُ فَقَسَتۡ قُلُوۡبُهُمۡ (۵۷:۱۶)

And be not like those who were given the Book before this: so a long period passed on them and their hearts hardened. (57:16)

The word "land" in the verse under discussion refers to Makkah. In verse 41 of Sūrah al-Ḥajj, Muslims are permitted to wage war to liberate the house of God from the occupation of the disbelievers: اَلَّذِيۡنَ اِنۡ مَّكَّنّٰهُمۡ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ اَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَمَرُوۡا بِالۡمَعۡرُوۡفِ وَنَهَوۡا عَنِ الۡمُنۡكَرِ ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ عَاقِبَةُ الۡاُمُوۡرِ.[40] Here too the word الۡاَرۡضِ is used for Makkah. Same is the case in verse 41 of Sūrah al-Ra'd. Various aspects related to it have been discussed in detail

38. Do these people have some other deities besides Us which will save them? Neither will they be able to help themselves nor would they have any support against Us.

39. In fact, the real thing is that We provided means and resources of the world to them and to their forefathers until a long period passed over them in this situation. Yet, are they not seeing that We are moving towards the land [of Makkah] by diminishing it from its borders. So are these people going to remain dominant?

40. We will help those people who if We grant them sovereignty in this land, they shall be diligent in the prayer, pay *zakāh*, command good and forbid evil. And the fate of all matters is in the hands of God alone.

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there.

In the verse under discussion, signs of dominance of Islam are referred to which by that time had become evident. The conflict between truth and falsehood was going on in Makkah at that time. As far as the city was concerned, the forces of truth were still facing oppression; however, Islam was spreading fast in its whereabouts especially in Madīnah. It was gradually becoming clear that the time for evil and falsehood was about to expire. Proceeding from its suburbs and whereabouts, Islam was slowly tightening its grip on the city of Makkah. By pointing towards this scenario, it is said that its borders are being gradually diminished by God and the hold of the disbelievers in this city is weakening. In the last part of the verse "so are these people going to remain dominant," the Qur'ān raises the question of dominance of Islam: will these disbelievers hold sway or will the adherents to Islam do so? If any sign is needed, why don't they observe what is happening around them.

قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اُنْذِرُكُمْ بِالْوَحْيِ ۖ وَلَا يَسْمَعُ الصُّمُّ الدُّعَآءَ اِذَا مَا يُنْذَرُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَلَئِنْ مَّسَّتْهُمْ نَفْحَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّكَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ يٰوَيْلَنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾[41]

In response to the demand of signs of torment from him, the Prophet (sws) should tell them that he is informing them through divine revelation. This is because instead of being inflicted by a calamity, they use their intellect to contemplate how they can secure themselves from God's wrath. This is in fact something beneficial to them and should have invoked their sentiments of gratitude. However, instead of duly valuing it, they are inviting their doom.

The words "but the deaf do not listen to a call when they are warned" sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws): if these people are not valuing this favour, it is their own misfortune. Their intellect and hearts are deaf. When the deaf are informed of an imminent danger, they do not hear this call and ultimately fall in the pit they are being warned of.

The implication of the second of the above cited verses is that today these people are stubbornly demanding a sign as if they have all the armoury to face it. However, all this obduracy is until the time of its appearance. If even a minor part of God's wrath manifests itself, they will realize their vulnerability. The word نَفْحَةٌ is not defined to show if they face even a small part of God's torment, their resistance will vanish, what to speak of His whole punishment.

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41. Say: I am only informing you through revelation, but the deaf do not listen to a call when they are warned. And if even any flare of your Lord's torment touched them, they will call out: "Alas, Our misfortune! Indeed, We were unjust to our souls."

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وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِيْنَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا ؕ وَاِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ اَتَيْنَا بِهَا ؕ وَكَفٰى بِنَا حٰسِبِيْنَ ﴿۴۷﴾[42]

Exegetes have generally interpreted the لِ in لِيَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ to connote فی. However, in my opinion, it signifies the consequence and objective. In other words, for the manifestation of the consequence of the Day of Judgement, God will place the balance. It may be kept in mind that the Day of Judgement is not an objective in itself: it is essential for the manifestation of God's justice.

The noun of كَانَ in وَاِنْ كَانَ is suppressed because of concomitant indication.

The feminine pronoun in اَتَيْنَا بِهَا refers to حَبَّةٍ.

The last part of the verse refers to the fact that God does not need the help of anyone to call people to account. If people think that this task is beyond Him, then this is their misunderstanding. And if some others think that He is dependent on their deities to find out information only they are privy too, then this again is a wrong notion.

In Sūrah Luqmān, this topic is referred to thus:

يٰبُنَيَّ اِنَّهَآ اِنْ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِيْ صَخْرَةٍ اَوْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ اَوْ فِي الْاَرْضِ يَاْتِ بِهَا اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَطِيْفٌ خَبِيْرٌ (۳۱:۱۶)

My son! If an act is of the size of a mustard seed, God will it bring forth even if it is in a mountain pass or in the heavens or the earth. Indeed, God is very Discerning and all-Knowing. (31:16)

Section V: Verses (48-77)

Earlier in verse 24, it was stated through the tongue of the Prophet (sws): "This is the teaching of those who are with me and of those also who were before me." Now those prophets are mentioned in a sequence who were the founders of their respective nations. Just before Muḥammad (sws), Moses (sws) was the messenger who was bestowed *sharī'ah* from God.[43] Thus he is mentioned the foremost and his brother Aaron (sws) too is referred to in this regard who was his helper. After that Abraham (sws) is mentioned who was the founder of nations and the leader of both branches of his progeny – the Israelites and the Ishmaelites. Thus during his mention, Isaac (sws), Jacob (sws) and Lot (sws) too are alluded to. After this, Noah (sws) is mentioned who

42. And on the Day of Judgement, We shall place the balance of justice. Then not the slightest injustice shall any soul suffer and if a person has a deed of the size of even a mustard seed, We shall bring it forth. And We are sufficient to take account.

43. It may be noted that Jesus (sws) was only a follower of the Mosaic *sharī'ah*.

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occupies the status of Adam the second. A reference to all these prophets is like a reference to the whole sequence of guidance. The purpose is to explain to the adversaries of the Prophet (sws) that they are being given the same guidance as the one given to people by his predecessors. Their prophet too has the same traits as the ones earlier prophets. At the same time, they are reminded that they will meet the same fate as that of the rejecters of the previous prophets if they persist in their denial.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى وَهٰرُوْنَ الْفُرْقَانَ وَضِيَآءً وَّ ذِكْرًا لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَيْبِ وَهُمْ مِّنَ
السَّاعَةِ مُشْفِقُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَهٰذَا ذِكْرٌ مُّبٰرَكٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ ؕ اَفَاَنْتُمْ لَهٗ مُنْكِرُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَآ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ رُشْدَهٗ مِنْ
قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا بِهٖ عٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ اِذْ قَالَ لِاَبِيْهِ وَقَوْمِهٖ مَا هٰذِهِ التَّمَاثِيْلُ الَّتِيْٓ اَنْتُمْ لَهَا عٰكِفُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ قَالُوْا وَجَدْنَآ
اٰبَآءَنَا لَهَا عٰبِدِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ قَالَ لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَآؤُكُمْ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ قَالُوْٓا اَجِئْتَنَا بِالْحَقِّ اَمْ اَنْتَ مِنَ
اللّٰعِبِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ قَالَ بَلْ رَّبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ الَّذِيْ فَطَرَهُنَّ ۫ وَاَنَا عَلٰى ذٰلِكُمْ مِّنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَ
تَاللّٰهِ لَاَكِيْدَنَّ اَصْنَامَكُمْ بَعْدَ اَنْ تُوَلُّوْا مُدْبِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُذٰذًا اِلَّا كَبِيْرًا لَّهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ اِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُوْنَ
﴿٥٨﴾ قَالُوْا مَنْ فَعَلَ هٰذَا بِاٰلِهَتِنَآ اِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ قَالُوْا سَمِعْنَا فَتًى يَّذْكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهٗٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالُوْا
فَاْتُوْا بِهٖ عَلٰٓى اَعْيُنِ النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْهَدُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالُوْٓا ءَاَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هٰذَا بِاٰلِهَتِنَا يٰٓاِبْرٰهِيْمُ ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ بَلْ
فَعَلَهٗ ۖ كَبِيْرُهُمْ هٰذَا فَسْـَٔلُوْهُمْ اِنْ كَانُوْا يَنْطِقُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ فَرَجَعُوْٓا اِلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوْٓا اِنَّكُمْ اَنْتُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ ثُمَّ
نُكِسُوْا عَلٰى رُءُوْسِهِمْ ۚ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ يَنْطِقُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ اَفَتَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ
شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ ﴿٦٦﴾ اُفٍّ لَّكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ قَالُوْا حَرِّقُوْهُ وَانْصُرُوْٓا اٰلِهَتَكُمْ
اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فٰعِلِيْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ قُلْنَا يٰنَارُ كُوْنِيْ بَرْدًا وَّ سَلٰمًا عَلٰٓى اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَاَرَادُوْا بِهٖ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنٰهُمُ الْاَخْسَرِيْنَ
﴿٧٠﴾ وَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَلُوْطًا اِلَى الْاَرْضِ الَّتِيْ بٰرَكْنَا فِيْهَا لِلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهٗٓ اِسْحٰقَ ؕ وَيَعْقُوْبَ نَافِلَةً ؕ وَكُلًّا
جَعَلْنَا صٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ اَئِمَّةً يَّهْدُوْنَ بِاَمْرِنَا وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرٰتِ وَاِقَامَ الصَّلٰوةِ وَاِيْتَآءَ
الزَّكٰوةِ ۚ وَكَانُوْا لَنَا عٰبِدِيْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَلُوْطًا اٰتَيْنٰهُ حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا وَّنَجَّيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِيْ كَانَتْ تَّعْمَلُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ ؕ
اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَاَدْخَلْنٰهُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِنَا ؕ اِنَّهٗ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَنُوْحًا اِذْ نَادٰى مِنْ قَبْلُ

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فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهٗ فَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَاَهْلَهٗ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَنَصَرْنٰهُ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَاَغْرَقْنٰهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾

And to Moses and to Aaron We gave the distinguisher between good and evil and a light and a reminder for the God-fearing. For those who fear their Lord without seeing Him and are afraid of the Hereafter. (48-49)

And this too is a blessed reminder that We have revealed. Then will you people only remain its rejecters? (50)

And before this, We gave Abraham his share of guidance and We knew him very well. When he said to his father and to the people of his nation: "What are these idols you are so devoted to?" They replied: "We have found our forefathers worshipping them only." He said: "You and your forefathers both have remained in evident error." They asked: "Whatever you are presenting before us, is it something serious or are you just jesting?" He said: "In fact, it is your Lord Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth Who created them and I am among those who bear witness to it before you. And by God! When you leave from here and go away, I have a plan for your idols." Thus, Abraham smashed them all to pieces except for their one big one so that they turn to it only. (51-58)

They said: "Who has done this with our idols? Indeed, he is very cruel." People said: "We had heard a youngster called Abraham mentioning them." They said: "Bring him before everyone so that they too bear witness." They asked: "Abraham! Did you do this to our idols?" He replied: "In fact, this chief of theirs has done it. So, ask them, if they can speak." At this, they realized a little and said to one another: "Indeed, it is you who are the wrongdoers." But then they dropped their heads. They said: "You do know that they cannot speak." He said: "Do you worship those instead of God who can neither benefit nor harm you. Shame on you and also on those you worship instead of God. Do you people not understand?" (59-67)

They said: "Burn him in the fire and rise to help your deities if you intend to do something." We commanded: "O Fire! Become cool and safe for Abraham." And they tried to contrive a plot against him; so, We foiled them. (68-70)

And We saved him and Lot, taking them to a land in which We had placed blessings for the people of the world. And We gave him Isaac and in addition Jacob also. And We made each of them righteous. And We made them leaders who would guide people according to Our direction. And We directed them to do pious deeds, be diligent in the prayer and pay the *zakāh* and they were the ones who only worshipped Us. (71-73)

And We blessed Lot with the power of decision-making and knowledge. And We delivered him from that settlement whose people were involved in abominable acts. They were a very wicked and dreadful people. And We admitted him into Our special

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mercy. Indeed, he was among the righteous. (74-75)

And We blessed Noah with Our guidance as well. Recall when, before this, he prayed. So, We accepted his prayer and delivered him and his people from a grave calamity, and, to help him, took revenge from the people who denied Our revelations. Indeed, they were a very wicked people. So, We drowned all of them. (76-77)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى وَهٰرُوْنَ الْفُرْقَانَ وَضِيَآءً وَّذِكْرًا لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَيْبِ وَهُمْ مِّنَ السَّاعَةِ مُشْفِقُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾[44]

The word الْفُرْقَانَ refers to the standard that distinguishes good from evil. Here it refers to the Torah. Before the Qur'ān, it occupied the status of the Book of God, and it is the Book of God that acts as a standard to distinguish good from evil. Precisely for this reason the Qur'ān too has been given this name. The word ضِيَآءً means "light." The words ضِيَآءً and نُوْرٌ are used for the Book of God because it delivers people from mental, moral, ideological and practical quagmires and brings them into light. The word ذِكْرٌ means "a reminder." Just as this word has been used for the Qur'ān at many instances, here it is used for the Torah. I have referred to the various aspects it encompasses in the exegesis of Sūrah Ṭāhā. Since these scriptures remind people of various facts based on the world within them and that around them as well as on history, they are called by this name.

The implication of this verse is that like the Torah, the Qur'ān too will be of benefit to those whose inner light – the light of intellect and nature – has not been extinguished. They are ones who fear God and the Hereafter. This topic has been discussed in detail in the opening verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah. For this reason, I am restricting myself to hints only.

وَهٰذَا ذِكْرٌ مُّبٰرَكٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ ؕ اَفَاَنْتُمْ لَهٗ مُنْكِرُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾[45]

The implication of this verse is that just as God gave Moses (sws) the Torah, He similarly revealed the Qur'ān too. Though, like the rain of mercy, it is a blessing for everyone, only they will benefit from it who have the ability. The last part of the verse addresses the Quraysh. In other words, they are told they should contemplate what they are really denying.

The account of Moses (sws) has been discussed in detail in the previous section of

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44. And to Moses and to Aaron We gave the distinguisher between good and evil and a light and a reminder for the God-fearing. For those who fear their Lord without seeing Him and are afraid of the Hereafter.

45. And this too is a blessed reminder that We have revealed. Then will you people only remain its rejecters?

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verses. For this reason, here it is briefly referred to. After this, the account of Abraham (sws) is brought up in detail.

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَآ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ رُشْدَهٗ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا بِهٖ عٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥١﴾[46]

The word رُشْدٌ means "guidance and comprehension of God." The way it occurs with an accusative pronoun here has incorporated a special meaning in it. The implication is that God gave Abraham (sws) the guidance and comprehension he was worthy of. There are various stages of this guidance and comprehension. The Almighty bestows it in proportion to a person's abilities in accordance with his status. The extent and share of guidance given to Abraham (sws) has been explained under verse 124 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. It is towards that share that this verse points.

The last part of the verse under discussion implies that the high status that God bestowed on Abraham (sws) was after he proved worthy of it by passing through very stringent trials. This also is a stern comment on those who do not find in themselves the strength to even follow the easiest of practices of Abraham (sws) but want to be ascribed to him. On the basis of this ascription, they even think that they deserve a high status in both this world and the next. It is stated that God does not give any person a status he does not deserve. Whatever He bestows on anyone is on the basis of that person's ability and capacity.

اِذْ قَالَ لِاَبِيْهِ وَقَوْمِهٖ مَا هٰذِهِ التَّمَاثِيْلُ الَّتِيْٓ اَنْتُمْ لَهَا عٰكِفُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾[47]

From this verse begins a mention of an incident that occurred earlier on in the life of Abraham (sws). It shows his bravery and courage as well as the guidance and comprehension he was bestowed upon by the Almighty. He was born in an idol-worshipping family and his father was a person who carved out idols. However, he was blessed with the light of monotheism which until now has continued to light up the world and will continue doing so until the Day of Judgement. His words mentioned in this verse challenge the beliefs of his family early in his life. The humiliation they carry for the idols and the sarcasm found in عٰكِفُوْنَ for the thick-headedness of his father and his nation is not hidden to anyone who appreciates the finer aspects of language. At such a tender age, only that person can raise this slogan of monotheism who is specially blessed by God and whose splendour and majesty of faith is devoid of any fear or greed.

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46. And before this, We gave Abraham his share of guidance and We knew him very well.

47. When he said to his father and to the people of his nation: "What are these idols you are so devoted to?"

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قَالُوْا وَجَدْنَآ اٰبَآءَنَا لَهَا عٰبِدِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ قَالَ لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَآؤُكُمْ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٥٤﴾[48]

The greatest argument that has always been presented in favour of such foolishness has been its origin from the forefathers. In spite of being so silly, it carries a lot of weight for the common masses. It appeals to their sentiments of tribal support and communal honour. As a result, adopting any different path or inviting towards it is a tall order. However, mere blows could not have extinguished the light God had blessed Abraham (sws) with. His answer mentioned in the verses under discussion reflect this. A mistake does not become guidance merely becomes it has been instituted by someone's forefathers. In fact, it must be judged on the basis of human nature and intellect.

قَالُوْٓا اَجِئْتَنَا بِالْحَقِّ اَمْ اَنْتَ مِنَ اللّٰعِبِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ قَالَ بَلْ رَّبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ الَّذِيْ فَطَرَهُنَّ ۫ وَاَنَا عَلٰى ذٰلِكُمْ مِّنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾[49]

The word حَقٌّ here means something that is serious and well thought of. Such was the strange nature of these words of Abraham (sws) for his people that they could not believe that any person in his senses could utter them. They thought that he was a young man with a raw mind and had said something impulsively without giving it any serious thought. That is why they posed the question referred to in the verse. They regarded this declaration of Abraham (sws) to be a non-serious expression and a matter of jest so that it does not have any impact on the masses. But Abraham (sws) took a second step in this regard by telling them that their stone-carved idols cannot be their Lord; in fact, their Lord is the God of the heavens and the earth Who has created them and that he invites them to this fact and proclaims it among them. The word شهادة here refers to a declaration and proclamation. It is used in this meaning at several instances in the Qur'ān.

وَتَاللّٰهِ لَاَكِيْدَنَّ اَصْنَامَكُمْ بَعْدَ اَنْ تُوَلُّوْا مُدْبِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾[50]

At this juncture, Abraham (sws) said these words to his nation. The word كَيْدٌ has been discussed at various places. It refers to a measure or a step done against a rival in secret.

It is evident from the words "when you leave from here and go away" that Abraham (sws) had made this assertion in some gathering within the temple. He just insinuated at his intention and hid his real scheme. Details are forthcoming in the circumstances it manifested itself. However, before reading about it, it is appropriate to take a look at

48. They replied: "We have found our forefathers worshipping them only." He said: "You and your forefathers both have remained in evident error."

49. They asked: "Whatever you are presenting before us, is it something serious or are you just jesting?" He said: "In fact, it is your Lord Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth Who created them and I am among those who bear witness to it before you."

50. "And by God! When you leave from here and go away, I have a plan for your idols."

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the style of Abraham's reasoning that was explained under verses 76-79 of Sūrah al-An'ām. Just as Abraham (sws) would use subtle sarcasm in his arguments, he would also try to lead his addressees gradually to the conclusion he wanted them to grasp. They would not even be able to imagine from where he would bring his arguments and leave them speechless. Ultimately, they would only be left with the option of confessing defeat. This is a very special feature of his reasoning.

On this occasion too, he resorted to this style of reasoning. Grabbing an opportunity at night time, he smashed the idols into small pieces and just left the large one intact. He reckoned that he would put the blame on it if they questioned him. He thought that he would ask them to inquire from these oppressed ones about their ordeal. Obviously, the only answer they would have would be that these idols cannot speak. He would then tell them that if they can neither inform them about the calamity that struck them nor avert it themselves, how can they regard them to be deities? It is this scheme which Abraham (sws) called as كَيْدٌ. The aspects of sarcasm, humour and gradual reasoning found in it are quite evident. Details of how this scheme left his adversaries with no excuse to deny the truth are forthcoming.

فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُذٰذًا اِلَّا كَبِيْرًا لَّهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ اِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾[51]

The word جُذٰذٌ refers to something that has been smashed to bits and pieces. This verse mentions the hidden scheme of Abraham (sws) that he adopted to fulfil his objective. If they realize their folly, he would be able to say to them in a conclusive way that when these small and big idols cannot speak, how can they regard them to be their deities?

قَالُوْا مَنْ فَعَلَ هٰذَا بِاٰلِهَتِنَآ اِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾[52]

This verse is composed of two separate sentences. Their amazement and anxiety is evident from the first, and their anger and fury from the second. In other words, when they saw what had happened to their idols, a question arose in their minds as to who was responsible for this? Then they expressed rage by regarding such a person to be cruel.

قَالُوْا سَمِعْنَا فَتًى يَّذْكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهٗٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ ﴿٦٠﴾[53]

Ultimately, people who were aware of Abraham's views, his above cited message and his challenge said that it must be him who had done this because they had heard him mention these idols in a degrading way. They suppressed the word "degrading"

51. Thus, Abraham smashed them all to pieces except for their one big one so that they turn to it only.

52. They said: "Who has done this with our idols? Indeed, he is very cruel."

53. People said: "We had heard a youngster called Abraham mentioning them."

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the way it is suppressed in verse 26. It is as if they did not even want to refer to their idols in such words.

The threat sounded by Abraham (sws) regarding the idols was done in an emphatic way and before people. It was not a secret plan. His message of monotheism too was declared openly by him. Many people knew his views. But they thought that these were mere expressions of a enthusiastic individual and nothing more than a rush of blood, as is referred to earlier. They never thought that he would take such a step. For this reason, they neither imposed any restriction on him not took any measure to protect their idols. They must have thought that however much a person may be averse to their idols, he could never dare to make such a dangerous move against them. But when this incident took place, those who were aware of him said that this has to be his work since they had heard him degrade their deities.

It is evident from the words "a youngster called Abraham" that although many people were aware of his message, he was not that well-known in the nation that people be aware of him personally. However, his name had reached various circles and he was beginning to be known as someone who had rebellious tendencies against their ancestral religion. It was because of this that he was referred to in a degrading way by those who knew him.

قَالُوْا فَاْتُوْا بِهٖ عَلٰٓى اَعْيُنِ النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْهَدُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾[54]

Once Abraham (sws) had been accused of this move against their idols, he was summoned in public by the chiefs of his nation so that the matter comes into everyone's notice. This must have been done because it was thought that the crime in their opinion was a grave one. It had a very stern punishment in their law. For this reason, they must have thought that an inquiry should be publicly conducted against him so that people know the gravity of the crime and the punishment pronounced is a means of teaching a lesson to all and sundry. It may be kept in mind that in those times, such verdicts were delivered by religious chiefs. If ever there was a government in place, it would only implement these verdicts.

قَالُوْٓا ءَاَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هٰذَا بِاٰلِهَتِنَا يٰٓاِبْرٰهِيْمُ ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهٗ ۖ كَبِيْرُهُمْ هٰذَا فَسْـَٔلُوْهُمْ اِنْ كَانُوْا يَنْطِقُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾[55]

Abraham (sws) was thus summoned to the court of the religious chiefs before the public and then ensued the conversation the verse mentions.

By giving the answer cited, he completely cornered the elders of his nation and they were not left with anything but to confess defeat. Verse 65 and 66 ahead depict their response.

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54. They said: "Bring him before everyone so that they too bear witness."

55. They asked: "Abraham! Did you do this to our idols?" He replied: "In fact, this chief of theirs has done it. So, ask them, if they can speak."

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People who think that the words "in fact, this chief of theirs has done it" of Abraham (sws) constitute a lie or is a statement of fear on his part have failed to understand the subtle eloquence of this sentence. The question of fear cannot even arise because if he had boldly declared monotheism in the temple of his nation, announced a move against the idols and then right in the middle of the court proceedings cursed the idols and their worshippers by the words "shame on you" (verse 67), then regarding such a proponent of the truth to be a cowardly person is absolutely illogical. How can such a person be scared of any danger?

As for his statement being regarded as a lie, then regardless of the fact that he could or could not lie, the words do not bespeak of this inference. What can be said about it is that his words constituted a very subtle form of sarcasm, meaningful mockery and a gradual sequence of argumentation. It does not have the slightest semblance of any falsehood in it. It is precisely for this reason that his own people never even accused him of lying. They could have easily done so if they really thought that he was lying. So, when his enemies dared not regard him a liar, why should we dare to do so?

Some people were led to form this view because of a ḥadīth in which it is stated that Abraham had lied three times. Once of these lies is the one referred to in the verse under discussion. In my opinion, they have misunderstood this ḥadīth.

The word كذب occurs in many meanings in the Arabic language. If it is said كذب فلان, then just as it means "he lied" it also means "he made a mistake" as well "he implied a double-meaning." The meaning intended at an instance is always determined by the context. As for the last of the above referred to meanings, it implies that what is said before one's rival makes him misunderstand what the speaker intends to convey. The manner of gradual argumentation to corner a rival mentioned earlier is also a type of it. Some very subtle and well-intended examples of such double-meaning statements are found in the Qur'ān and also in the conversations of our illustrious predecessors of the past. In Sūrah Yūsuf, some very telling examples can be seen too. Another subtle example is the words of Abraham (sws) إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ mentioned in verse 89 of Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt where it shall be explained. Not only is this manner of speaking flawless, at times it is a very effective measure resorted to by the righteous. I can present examples from classical Arabic literature in support of this meaning in which the word كذب is ascribed to Abraham (sws), but this will prolong the discussion. I will wait for an opportune moment to present it.

It may be kept in mind that the words "in fact, this chief of theirs has done it" of Abraham (sws) form a very clear argument to refute polytheism that has been mentioned in the Qur'ān in various styles. If it is accepted that there are several big and small deities who govern this universe, there is no reason for the chief deity to accept others as his partners. And if because of some temporary benefit, he does accept them, it is quite probable that one day he just dismantles their partnership. It is this reality which Abraham (sws) tried to teach through the move he made. It will also become evident from later verses that his addressees even understood it though they

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could not accept it. Nevertheless, this whole exercise is a very sagacious one undertaken to refute and put to shame polytheism and its proponents. There is not the slightest reason to regard it as a lie.

فَرَجَعُوْٓا اِلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوْٓا اِنَّكُمْ اَنْتُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ۙ﴿۶۴﴾[56]

The verse implies that this measure undertaken by Abraham (sws) did startle them and they did turn towards their innate guidance; they started to say to one another that they call this young person to be a wrongdoer whereas he has proven them to be wrongdoers: their deities do not even have the strength to ward off a calamity that strikes them or even state it before others.

ثُمَّ نُكِسُوْا عَلٰى رُءُوْسِهِمْ ۚ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ يَنْطِقُوْنَ ﴿۶۵﴾[57]

The word نکس means to topple something on its head. In other words, they did open their eyes for a while as a result of this warning from Abraham (sws) but then their heads dropped down and uttered what the verse says. Even people who are such ignorant at times see the light as a result of an incident or a warning, but their bias and prejudice does not let them accept the truth. As a result, they again become deaf and blind and revert to their ill-ways.

قَالَ اَفَتَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ ﴿۶۶﴾[58]

Once his addressees made the confession referred to in the previous verse, Abraham (sws) struck a telling blow by continuing in the same vein and uttering these words. They could only have had the required impact after the helplessness of the idols had become evident. In the absence of this, these people would have had several excuses to make. However, now that their idols were before them in shattered pieces, their worshippers were left shell-shocked and had nothing to say.

اُفٍّ لَّكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۶۷﴾[59]

The expression اُفٍّ لَّكُمْ connotes extreme hate and aversion. It was uttered once Abraham (sws) had conclusively communicated the truth to his people and they were not left with any excuse. The last part of the verse is a reflection on their foolishness: what is the benefit of worshipping such stone idols who cannot even defend

56. At this, they realized a little and said to one another: "Indeed, it is you who are the wrongdoers."

57. But then they dropped their heads. They said: "You do know that they cannot speak."

58. He said: "Do you worship those instead of God who can neither benefit nor harm you."

59. "Shame on you and also on those you worship instead of God. Do you people not understand?"

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themselves? How can help them?

قَالُوْا حَرِّقُوْهُ وَانْصُرُوْٓا اٰلِهَتَكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فٰعِلِيْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾[60]

When the idol-worshippers and the temple-pundits saw that they had been exposed, they incited the masses to rise in support of their deities. It seems that this appeal was very effective and some suggestions too came to the fore about they should now deal with Abraham (sws). However, the pundits were not satisfied with these suggestions. They opined that burning him would be the most effective measure. They thought that this was the only effective way to deal with this mess.

قُلْنَا يٰنَارُ كُوْنِيْ بَرْدًا وَّسَلٰمًا عَلٰٓى اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ﴿٦٩﴾[61]

As a consequence of this decision, Abraham (sws) was thrown into a fire but God made him secure from its ill-effects. How exactly was this done is not mentioned in the Qur'ān? The effects of all elements of nature are under God's control and hence if the fire was deprived of its effects, it is not improbable at all. He has the power to alleviate the effect of poison when He wants to. Even today we witness such out of the ordinary happenings.

وَاَرَادُوْا بِهٖ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنٰهُمُ الْاَخْسَرِيْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾[62]

The pundits conspired to have Abraham (sws) cast in the fire. Verse 98 of Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt also refers to it. There I will, God willing, explain it. This conspiracy failed and after that Abraham (sws) migrated from that place.

وَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَلُوْطًا اِلَى الْاَرْضِ الَّتِيْ بٰرَكْنَا فِيْهَا لِلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٧١﴾[63]

The land referred to here is Canaan. In other words, when matters reached the extent that Abraham (sws) could not stay in his country, God saved him and Lot (sws) from the evil of their nations and took him to this land. Lot (sws) was Abraham's nephew. Even though the circle of preaching of both was different, both accompanied each other in this migration. Until migration both invited their respective nations to the truth. After migration, both went to different areas. What happened to Abraham's

60. They said: "Burn him in the fire and rise to help your deities if you intend to do something."

61. We commanded: "O Fire! Become cool and safe for Abraham."

62. And they tried to contrive a plot against him; so, We foiled them.

63. And We saved him and Lot, taking them to a land in which We had placed blessings for the people of the world.

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people after he left them is not known.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهٗٓ اِسْحٰقَ ؕ وَيَعْقُوْبَ نَافِلَةً ؕ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿۷۲﴾ وَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ اَئِمَّةً يَّهْدُوْنَ بِاَمْرِنَا وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرٰتِ وَاِقَامَ الصَّلٰوةِ وَاِيْتَآءَ الزَّكٰوةِ ۚ وَكَانُوْا لَنَا عٰبِدِيْنَ ﴿۷۳﴾[64]

These verses mention the favours God blessed Abraham (sws) with one after the other after he had migrated. It was for the sake of God that he had left his family and near ones. So God blessed him with sons and grandsons in return. The relatives he had left were absolutely wretched and worthless. God replaced them with pious and worthy individuals. The words "in addition" refer to the fact though God granted Ishmael (sws) to Abraham (sws) as a result of his supplication, He also blessed him in addition with Isaac (sws) and Jacob (sws) and after that a series of prophets came in their progeny.[65] The words وَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ اَئِمَّةً indicate that these prophets were founders of nations and were their leaders. Though each prophet is a leader by virtue of his status, there have been such prophets who had none except their shadow as their follower. Both Isaac (sws) and Jacob (sws) were in fact leaders of their nation and appointed by God.

The expression اِقَامَ الصَّلٰوةِ is actually اِقَامَةَ الصَّلٰوةِ. The ة has been dropped in deference to the beat and rhythm of the verse. Such reductions are common in Arabic. By pointing out the components of the message of these prophets, the purpose is to show that their message was the same as that of the Qur'ān. All prophets worshipped God only and never submitted themselves to anyone but Him. The implication is that those who claim to be their followers should evaluate their own beliefs and deeds and see how far they have strayed from their teachings.

وَلُوْطًا اٰتَيْنٰهُ حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا وَّنَجَّيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِيْ كَانَتْ تَّعْمَلُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿۷۴﴾ وَاَدْخَلْنٰهُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِنَا ؕ اِنَّهٗ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿۷۵﴾[66]

Earlier Lot (sws) was mentioned in connection with Abraham (sws). Now he is

64. And We gave him Isaac and in addition Jacob also. And We made each of them righteous. And We made them leaders who would guide people according to Our direction. And We directed them to do pious deeds, be diligent in the prayer and pay the *zakāh* and they were the ones who only worshipped Us.

65. Under verses 100-112, it will be explained that God rewarded Abraham (sws) with Ishmael (sws) as a result of his supplication and Isaac (sws) and Jacob (sws) as a result of offering Ishmael (sws) for sacrifice. The way the Jews and have distored this historcal fact has been exposed by my mentor Farāhī.

66. And We blessed Lot with the power of decision-making and knowledge. And We delivered him from that settlement whose people were involved in abominable acts. They were a very wicked and dreadful people. And We admitted him into Our special mercy. Indeed, he was among the righteous.

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mentioned independently. "Knowledge" here refers to the knowledge of prophethood. As far as the "power of decision making" mentioned in the verse is concerned, it is the consequence of purity in intellect and nature. "Knowledge" is the consequence of divine revelation. The people whom God chose for this status were the best of human beings. They developed their innate abilities until their inner self was fully refined and became worthy of receiving divine revelation. Then when God sent them this revelation, their inner light was supplemented by this divine light.

The details of how Lot (sws) was delivered from the city whose people were involved in abominable acts have already been referred to: he too migrated to Syria along with Abraham (sws). The word "delivered" has been used to show that he was rendered safe from the punishment that visited his people. The expression "abominable acts" primarily refers to their homosexuality. However, the plural shows that such an evil habit is never alone: wherever it surfaces in a nation, it brings with it a host of other evils too. Here they are not named because such is their heinous nature that they are not even worthy of mention. The words "they were a very wicked and dreadful people" point to the reason God delivered His special servant from them and punished them. God did not want His pious and righteous people to stay among the wicked and wretched ones. The word "mercy" refers to the success they achieved in this world by being rendered secure and also the success they will achieve in the Hereafter.

وَنُوْحًا اِذْ نَادٰى مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهٗ فَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَاَهْلَهٗ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿۷۶﴾[67]

The accusative form of نُوْحًا is due to the meaning that emanates from the previous verses. The implication would be: "Just as We showed mercy to the afore-mentioned prophets, delivered and helped them, in a similar way, We delivered Noah too and came to His help."

The verse refers to the final supplication of Noah (sws) that is mentioned in Sūrah Nūḥ and which makes the heart tremble. The way this supplication was accepted will be mentioned in detail in that *sūrah*. Here, readers may just read the last verses of this supplication:

مِمَّا خَطِيْٓـٰٔتِهِمْ اُغْرِقُوْا فَاُدْخِلُوْا نَارًا فَلَمْ يَجِدُوْا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اَنْصَارًا ۝ وَقَالَ نُوْحٌ رَّبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْاَرْضِ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ دَيَّارًا ۝ اِنَّكَ اِنْ تَذَرْهُمْ يُضِلُّوْا عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوْٓا اِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا ۝ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِيْ وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِمَنْ دَخَلَ بَيْتِيَ مُؤْمِنًا وَّلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ۭ وَلَا تَزِدِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ اِلَّا تَبَارًا ۝ (۷۱:۲۵-۲۸)

Because of their misdeeds the people of Noah were drowned and were cast into the fire. And they could not find anyone to help them against God. And Noah said:

67. And We blessed Noah with Our guidance as well. Recall when, before this, he prayed. So, We accepted his prayer and delivered him and his people from a grave calamity.

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"O Lord! Leave not one of these disbelievers in the land. If You spare them, they will mislead Your servants and will beget none but sinners and disbelievers. Forgive me, Lord, and forgive my parents and everyone who enters my house as a believer and forgive all believing men and believing women and increase these disbelievers only in ruin." (72:25-28)

I have presented my research on the word اَهۡل under verse 132 of Sūrah Ṭāhā. It refers not only to a person's family but also to his companions and followers.

The expression "a grave calamity" refers to the affliction Noah (sws) and his followers suffered at the hands of the enemies of the truth and also the great torment which finally completely destroyed them.

وَنَصَرۡنٰهُ مِنَ الۡقَوۡمِ الَّذِيۡنَ كَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ؕ اِنَّهُمۡ كَانُوۡا قَوۡمَ سَوۡءٍ فَاَغۡرَقۡنٰهُمۡ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ ﴿۷۷﴾ [68]

The preposition مِنۡ after نَصَرۡنٰا shows that a verb to the effect اتتقمنا (We took revenge) is understood to be present here. Thus an accurate translation would be: "We helped him and took revenge from the people who denied Our revelations."

The verse very concisely refers to their crimes. Details can be seen in the earlier *sūrahs*. They will also be found ahead in Sūrah Nūḥ. Here readers may keep in mind the fact that the extent of time period in which Noah (sws) tried to warn his nation bears no parallel. In Sūrah Nūḥ, the way he compassionately and devotedly went upon trying to awaken his nation from their slumber can be seen. However, so hard-hearted were these people that nothing could impact them. Ultimately, they were punished for this and the whole nation was drowned by the Almighty. It was as if the whole nation was a pile of filth that was cleansed from the face of the earth by water from heavens and the earth at God's behest. After that, God once again made Noah (sws) and his followers inhabit the earth. In order to fully grasp this account, it would have been better if its description in the Torah could be studied. However, a more appropriate place for this study is Sūrah Nūḥ.

Section VI: Verses (78-94)

In the preceding verses, those prophets were mentioned in the chronological order who were founders of their nations. Coming up is the mention of prophets who had some specific traits in their conduct. They are the ones who are an example for all mankind with regard to their character. Foremost, David (sws) and Solomon (sws) are mentioned. Both were best examples of kings with a very humble temperament. They were blessed by God with majesty and splendour but they remained thankful to God

68. And, to help him, took revenge from the people who denied Our revelations. Indeed, they were a very wicked people. So, We drowned all of them.

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and were never misled by their grandeur. They spent all their resources and abilities to please God. After that Job (sws), Ishmael (sws), Idrīs (sws) and Dhū al-Kifl (sws) are mentioned. They outshone human beings with regard to their patience and perseverance. God put them through severe trials but they remained steadfast in each. After that Jonah (sws), Zacharias (sws) and Mary (sws) are mentioned. They called upon their Lord in hopeless and desperate circumstances. God accepted their supplications and out of His special mercy made the impossible possible for them.

There is a great lesson in the lives of these messengers for the addressees of this *sūrah* who were showing arrogance on being granted favours and blessings from God. At the same time, they also provide guidance to the oppressed companions of the Prophet (sws) who at that time were passing through very precarious trials and could see nothing but darkness in front of them.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَ دَاوٗدَ وَ سُلَيْمٰنَ اِذْ يَحْكُمٰنِ فِي الْحَرْثِ اِذْ نَفَشَتْ فِيْهِ غَنَمُ الْقَوْمِ ۚ وَ كُنَّا لِحُكْمِهِمْ شٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿۷۸﴾
فَفَهَّمْنٰهَا سُلَيْمٰنَ ۚ وَ كُلًّا اٰتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَّ عِلْمًا ۫ وَّ سَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوٗدَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَ الطَّيْرَ ؕ وَ كُنَّا فٰعِلِيْنَ ﴿۷۹﴾
وَ عَلَّمْنٰهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوْسٍ لَّكُمْ لِتُحْصِنَكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَاْسِكُمْ ۚ فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ شٰكِرُوْنَ ﴿۸۰﴾ وَ لِسُلَيْمٰنَ الرِّيْحَ عَاصِفَةً
تَجْرِيْ بِاَمْرِهٖۤ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ الَّتِيْ بٰرَكْنَا فِيْهَا ؕ وَ كُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾ وَ مِنَ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ مَنْ يَّغُوْصُوْنَ لَهٗ
وَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ عَمَلًا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَ كُنَّا لَهُمْ حٰفِظِيْنَ ﴿۸۲﴾ وَ اَيُّوْبَ اِذْ نَادٰى رَبَّهٗۤ اَنِّيْ مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَ اَنْتَ اَرْحَمُ
الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ﴿۸۳﴾ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهٗ فَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهٖ مِنْ ضُرٍّ ۫ وَّ اٰتَيْنٰهُ اَهْلَهٗ وَ مِثْلَهُمْ مَّعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا
وَ ذِكْرٰى لِلْعٰبِدِيْنَ ﴿۸۴﴾ وَ اِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَ اِدْرِيْسَ وَ ذَا الْكِفْلِ ؕ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿۸۵﴾ وَ اَدْخَلْنٰهُمْ فِيْ رَحْمَتِنَا ؕ
اِنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿۸۶﴾ وَ ذَا النُّوْنِ اِذْ ذَّهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ اَنْ لَّنْ نَّقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادٰى فِي الظُّلُمٰتِ اَنْ لَّاۤ
اِلٰهَ اِلَّاۤ اَنْتَ سُبْحٰنَكَ ۖ اِنِّيْ كُنْتُ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۸۷﴾ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهٗ ۙ وَ نَجَّيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ ؕ وَ كَذٰلِكَ نُـْٔجِي
الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾ وَ زَكَرِيَّاۤ اِذْ نَادٰى رَبَّهٗ رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنِيْ فَرْدًا وَّ اَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْوٰرِثِيْنَ ﴿۸۹﴾ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهٗ ۖ وَ وَهَبْنَا لَهٗ
يَحْيٰى وَ اَصْلَحْنَا لَهٗ زَوْجَهٗ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا يُسٰرِعُوْنَ فِي الْخَيْرٰتِ وَ يَدْعُوْنَنَا رَغَبًا وَّ رَهَبًا ؕ وَ كَانُوْا لَنَا خٰشِعِيْنَ ﴿۹۰﴾
وَ الَّتِيْۤ اَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ رُّوْحِنَا وَ جَعَلْنٰهَا وَ ابْنَهَاۤ اٰيَةً لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۹۱﴾ اِنَّ هٰذِهٖۤ اُمَّتُكُمْ
اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً ۖ وَّ اَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْنِ ﴿۹۲﴾ وَ تَقَطَّعُوْۤا اَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ كُلٌّ اِلَيْنَا رٰجِعُوْنَ ﴿۹۳﴾ فَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِنَ

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الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا كُفْرَانَ لِسَعْيِهٖ ۚ وَاِنَّا لَهٗ كٰتِبُوْنَ ﴿٩٤﴾

And We also showed Our favour to David and Solomon. Recall, when they were passing a judgement on the dispute of a cultivated land when the goats of some people had barged into it at night and We were observing this matter. So, We guided Solomon about the dispute and We had blessed each of them wisdom and knowledge. And We had made the mountains and the birds sing together with David. They would glorify God along with him and it is We Who were the ones Who did these things. And We had taught him the skill of a military attire for you so that it may protect you in warfare. Then will you also express gratitude in this way? (78-80)

And We had made strong winds subservient to Solomon which would blow at his directive to a land in which We had placed blessings. And We are aware of everything. And We had also made subservient to him from among the devils who would dive down into the seas for him and would do other errands as well and We were watching over them. (81-82)

And We showed mercy to Job as well when he called out to his Lord: "I am in distress and you are the Most Merciful among all the merciful." So We accepted His prayer and delivered him of his suffering and restored to him his family too, and as many more with them also from Our special grace and so that this is a reminder for those who worship God. (83-84)

And We also showed favour to Ishmael, Idrīs and Dhū al-Kifl. All these were among the steadfast. And We admitted them into Our mercy. Indeed, they were among the pious. (85-86)

And We showed mercy to the companion of the fish also when being angry with them he left his people and he thought that We shall not question him. Thus he cried out in the layers of darkness: "There is no deity except you. Exalted are you. Indeed, I am at fault." Thereupon, We answered his prayer and relieved him of sorrow. And in this way do We deliver the believers. (87-88)

And We showed favour to Zacharias also when he called out to his Lord: "Lord! Do not leave me by myself and you are the best of all heirs." So, We answered this prayer and blessed him with John and made his wife favourable for him. Indeed, these people would take the initiative in righteous deeds and would worship Us in every state of hope and despair and would remain submissive to Us. (89-90)

And on that [chaste woman] also who guarded her vulnerable organs. So, We blew into her Our Spirit and made her and her son a sign for the people of the world. (91)

This community of yours is one community and I only am your Lord. So, worship Me alone. And they tore their religion into pieces. Each has to return to Us. Then he who does righteous deeds and also has faith, his effort will not go waste. We are Ones writing it for him. (92-94)

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Explanation

وَدَاوٗدَ وَسُلَيْمٰنَ اِذْ يَحْكُمٰنِ فِي الْحَرْثِ اِذْ نَفَشَتْ فِيْهِ غَنَمُ الْقَوْمِ ۚ وَكُنَّا لِحُكْمِهِمْ شٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَفَهَّمْنٰهَا سُلَيْمٰنَ ۚ وَكُلًّا اٰتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا ۡ وَّسَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوٗدَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ ۭ وَكُنَّا فٰعِلِيْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾[69]

The nouns David and Solomon occur in the text in their accusative form just as is the case with Noah earlier on is. In other words, there is an understood verb indicated by the context that is suppressed. It has been revealed in the translation.

The word نَفَشَ refers to the grazing of cattle and goats at night. The feminine pronoun in فَفَهَّمْنٰهَا occurs in deference to the antecedent that is evident from the context. Examples of this can be seen in earlier *sūrahs*.

The verses refer to a dispute that was referred to David (sws) for his verdict. No details are provided about it. What only is evident is that a herd of goats belonging to someone had barged into the cultivated fields of another person. David (sws) pronounced his verdict in this matter but was not able to reach its crux. His son Solomon (sws) who was still young at that time gave his opinion which was more correct and just. Ultimately, David (sws) decided in accordance with his son's opinion. The question that what was the verdict delivered by the father and what was the opinion of the son is a needless one since here the purpose of the Qur'ān is not to present the details of the dispute; its purpose rather is to show the extent of caution David (sws) exercised in his verdicts in spite of being a ruler and a prophet: as soon as he realized his mistake on the basis of his young son's opinion, he immediately changed his decision and accepted the opinion of someone junior and inexperienced. The second purpose is to show that such was the son God blessed David (sws) with that even in his youth he had a very pronounced ability of decision-making: he would at times advise his illustrious father who held his advice in high regard. It is a matter of great fortune that a father should have such an accomplished son who is not only someone he can count on in matters of governance but who also at times guide him. It is to point to this reality that this dispute is referred to here. Our exegetes have presented the details of a dispute that is totally extraneous to the Qur'ān. Different scenarios can be assumed but they will always be conjectural and this writer does not like to go after conjectures.

The words "We were observing this matter" imply that after granting the reins of political leadership to this family, God did not become aloof of its affairs. He continued to observe their governance and assessed how sensitive they were to

69. And We also showed Our favour to David and Solomon. Recall, when they were passing a judgement on the dispute of a cultivated land when the goats of some people had barged into it at night and We were observing this matter. So, We guided Solomon about the dispute and We had blessed each of them wisdom and knowledge. And We had made the mountains and the birds sing together with David. They would glorify God along with him and it is We Who were the ones Who did these things.

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administer justice among their subjects and how sharp, cautious, selfless and unbiased were they in their own responsibilities. Thus both father and son proved worthy of these responsibilities. As soon as the son realized that father had committed a mistake in administering justice, he took it upon himself to advise him. On the other hand, as soon as the father realized that the son's opinion is more just, he immediately submitted to it. It is this character which defines a good ruler and whomsoever God makes a ruler, He does so to judge this conduct.

The words "and We had blessed each of them wisdom and knowledge" imply that it because of this character trait of the father and son that God blessed both with prophethood and reins of political authority.

The words "and We had made the mountains and the birds sing together with David" point to the simple and austere nature of David (sws). On the one hand, God made him a ruler and he would establish peace and administer justice among his subjects with full vigilance and altruism. On other hand, such was his God-connection that at night he would go to the mountains which would then reverberate with the sounds of his hymns and prayers that glorified and praised God and even the birds would join him in chorus. It is evident from the Torah that David (sws) was a very melodious singer and also had a very moving voice. Moreoever, all his prayers and supplications are in the forms of hymns and these hymns are divine. If we read the Pslams, we can see that the poetical essence in the translation of these hymns has been lost but even then hearts shudder on reading them. When a tuneful singer like David (sws) would have chanted these divine hymns while sitting among the valleys of the mountains in the exhilerating early hours of morning, then surely the mountains would have sung with him together with the birds. These words should not be regarded as some poetic utterance; they are a fact. The Qur'ān has specified that each and every object of this universe is extolling the Almighty but we are not able to understand it. This liking for extolling the Almighty is enhanced when a person chants a song that reflects their feelings. At that time, they become ecstatic and join that person in singing. If we do not hear the hymns and praises sung by birds and mountains, we must not think that there is none who hears them. Those who have fervent hearts and ardent souls can hear them.

It is worth noting that the expression سَخَّرْنَا لَهُ is not used. Instead it is said: سَخَّرْنَا مَعهُ. Evident from the word مَعهُ is that the Almighty had made the mountains and birds join David (sws) in his chants. They would chip in with him.

Here the verb يُسَبِّحْنَ وَ الطَّيْرَ occurs between the co-ordinated words الْجِبَالَ and الطَّيْرَ. Apparently it should have come after الطَّيْرَ. The reason that this word is pre-placed is that the glorification chants of the birds are well known whereas that of mountains is a unique thing. For this reason, the verb was placed just adjacent to it.

The words وَكُنَّا فٰعِلِيْنَ imply that only God can do these tasks none else. He can put the trees, stones, moutains, birds and animals in the service of anyone He wants to. Such favours of God are not acquired by force or power; they are purely His gifts.

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وَعَلَّمْنٰهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوْسٍ لَّكُمْ لِتُحْصِنَكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَاْسِكُمْ ۚ فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ شٰكِرُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾[70]

Not only was David (sws) fully devoted to God, he was also a valiant soldier. The verse refers to the body armour which David (sws) invented. It is evident from history that the forms of this attire which David (sws) invented bore no parallel. In classical Arabic poetry related to warfare, armour made by him is often mentioned. In the war attire of those times, it was this armour which was the most important. Now times have chaned and such weapons and instruments are no longer needed. However, in those times, David's (sws) army was considered to be the strongest on the basis of this armour. The purpose here is to show that he was both a God-devoted person and someone with great military might: on the one hand, his moving chants and hymns would melt the mountains and on the other hand, his military inventions and onslaughts would continue to strike awe in his enemies.

After highlighting both these aspects of his life, the verse ends by asking the addressees of this *sūrah* if they too have the courage to become grateful like him. In spite of being blessed with wisdom, prophethood, political authority and might such was his simple and austere nature. It is this amalgation of worldly and next-worldly traits that God requires and such are His grateful people. They are not like the wretched ones who praise the splendour and grandeur of this father and son but have become slaves of this world.

وَلِسُلَيْمٰنَ الرِّيْحَ عَاصِفَةً تَجْرِيْ بِاَمْرِهٖۤ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ الَّتِيْ بٰرَكْنَا فِيْهَا ؕ وَكُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٨١﴾[71]

The presence of ل in لِسُلَيْمٰنَ shows that the verb سَخَّرْنَا is suppressed here. When this verb occurs with the preposition ل, it means putting something into the service of someone. In other words, the meaning is: "We had subdued the winds to make them subservient to Solomon (sws)." It is evident from history that David (sws) had a very large land force but it was in the reign of Solomon (sws) that the sea force made unparallelled advancements. He had invented ships with sails which travelled to India and to western islands. Their naval fleet was the most powerful in its times. In the Red sea, its centre was Tarsīs which is in the Gulf of 'Aqabah and there were sea ports in Ṣuwar, Ṭā'ir and Yāfah. Until that time, sails were the only means to control sea winds. These sails also served as engines for the ships. Solomon (sws) had invented such sails which would allow ships to navigate smoothly in stormy winds. They would make long trips to their destinations in all types of favourable or unfavourable winds without any fear. Since all this was the consequence of the science taught by

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70. And We had taught him the skill of a military attire for you so that it may protect you in warfare. Then will you also express gratitude in this way?

71. And We had made strong winds subservient to Solomon which would blow at his directive to a land in which We had placed blessings. And We are aware of everything.

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God, it has been stated that God had made strong winds subservient to Solomon (sws) which would blow at this behest.

The words "a land in which We had placed blessings" refer to the land of Palestine and Syria etc. Being very lush and fertile, the land had great trade significance.

The sentence وَكُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عٰلِمِيْنَ also occurred in verse 51 with a slight change in connection with Abraham (sws). It has already been explained there. The implication is that God fully knew the abilities and strengths of Solomon (sws). It is because of this that He gave him the power to harness winds. After blessing him with this power, God did not become aloof; He continued to observe how Solomon (sws) used it. In fact, it is this one aspect which has failed to be understood by our scientists of current times. Instead of regarding their cosmological achievements to be a blessing of God, they think that these are the result of their own competence. The fact is that all these successes owe themselves to the intellect and guidance given to them by God. It is towards this reality that the words وَكُنَّا فٰعِلِيْنَ point earlier. Once a person wrongly thinks that all his inventions owe themselves to his ability, another wrong notion springs forth which is even more destructive: he thinks that the control he has achieved of these elements can be used by him in any way he wants to; none can stop him. The Qur'ān has criticized this by the words وَكُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عٰلِمِيْنَ: providence is not so naïve as to hand over the keys of its treasures to people and become aloof so that people can make hay and do whatever they want to. In fact, it is aware of everything and when this is so, it means that if someone wrongly uses these abilities, he will definitely be held accountable one day. Both David (sws) and Solomon (sws) knew this fact very well. For this reason, even after achieving great success at both land and sea, they were never misled to think that all this was due to their own abilities; on the contrary, they regarded all these things to be God's blessings and whatever steps they took, they did so with the realization that one day they will be held accountable before God. It is this realization that makes a person truly grateful and obedient to God. This aspect of the lives of David (sws) and Solomon (sws) will be discussed in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Naml.

وَمِنَ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ مَنْ يَّغُوْصُوْنَ لَهٗ وَيَعْمَلُوْنَ عَمَلًا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَكُنَّا لَهُمْ حٰفِظِيْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾[72]

The devils referred to are the ones that were subservient to Solomon (sws). It is evident from both the Qur'ān and the Torah that he had a formal army of human beings, the jinn and birds. Thus it is stated in verse 17 of Sūrah al-Naml: وَحُشِرَ لِسُلَيْمٰنَ جُنُوْدُهٗ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ وَالطَّيْرِ فَهُمْ يُوْزَعُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾.[73] This *sūrah* also mentions an powerful jinn that he had. The jinn had told him that if ordered, he could bring over the throne of queen

72. And We had also made subservient to him from among the devils who would dive down into the seas for him and would do other errands as well and We were watching over them.

73. And the army of Solomon from among the jinn, humans and birds was put to regular inspection.

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Sheeba to him before his court was dismissed. These jinn would dive into the oceans to obtain corals and pearls and would also run other errands. By putting these evil elements into the service of mankind was a great feat of Solomon (sws). The real task before a competent ruler is not only to employ the beneficial elements but also those otherwise for the development and progress of society. We have already discussed in detail the knowledge that was given to Solomon (sws) to subdue devils under verse 102 of Sūrah al-Baqarah where the incident of Hārūt and Mārūt is mentioned. Some people are of the opinion that devils here refer to those disbelieving nations who were under his control. However, in my opinion, this would amount to linguistic injustice to the word. No doubt, this word has been used in the Qur'ān for miscreants among both men and jinn. However, it has never been used for disbelieving nations in the absolute sense. It can refer to miscreant elements among disbelieving nations but that too in a secondary way – never primarily. It basically can only connote miscreants among the jinn.

The words وَكُنَّا لَهُمْ حٰفِظِيْنَ refer to the fact that it was not that Solomon (sws) could control these devils on his own; it was God Who had given them in His control and He was watching over them so that none could escape or go against the wishes of Solomon (sws). Had this not been the case, they would have played havoc. These words actually admonish people who after harnessing certain forces of nature think that they have become their masters: neither can anyone snatch them nor can these forces rebel against them. This notion is based on ignorance and short-sightedness. If today man has got control over steam, gas, electricity and the atom etc, it is only because God has made this possible for him. Moreover, they will only remain in his control as long as God intends. If God loosens His grip over them, these forces through which such huge achievements have been made will wreak havoc.

وَاَيُّوْبَ اِذْ نَادٰى رَبَّهٗٓ اَنِّيْ مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَاَنْتَ اَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهٗ فَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهٖ مِنْ ضُرٍّ وَّاٰتَيْنٰهُ اَهْلَهٗ وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَّعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَذِكْرٰى لِلْعٰبِدِيْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾[74]

After citing two outstanding exponents of gratitude, mention is now coming up of prophets who set sterling examples of their patience. In this regard, Job (sws) is mentioned the foremost. It is evident from the Bible that he was a very righteous person who lived in Uz. The Almighty had blessed him with a large family and a lot of wealth. He had seven sons and three daughters. He also had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, one thousand oxen and five hundred donkeys who would carry their burdens. He had several servants. No one was as wealthy as him in the East.

74. And We showed mercy to Job as well when he called out to his Lord: "I am in distress and you are the Most Merciful among all the merciful." So We accepted His prayer and delivered him of his suffering and restored to him his family too, and as many more with them also from Our special grace and so that this is a reminder for those who worship God.

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However, in spite of this splendour he was very grateful and obedient to God. He never got incriminated with any sin.

This righteousness of his was looked upon with jealousy by Satan and his agents. They reproached his righteousness by saying that it is because God has blessed him with affluence of all sorts; if he is deprived of this, he will never be grateful to God (Job, 4:9-11).

After this he was afflicted with a series of trials from God. His herds were looted, servants were killed, children passed away and all his wealth and splendour vanished. Instead of losing hope in God, he pleaded and implored before Him. The Bible records:

> Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." (Job: 1, 20-22)

After financial afflictions, Job undervent a series of ailments and matters reached the extent:

> ... Afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes. (Job, 2:7-8)

Job bore this affliction too with great patience and trust in God – the way he did in the case of his earlier afflictions. Ultimately, he passed this test too in flying colours and was rewarded by God with much more than he had lost:

> After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. … The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part. … After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. (Job, 42:10-16)

Consider the eloquence of the supplication: اَنِّیۡ مَسَّنِیَ الضُّرُّ وَ اَنۡتَ اَرۡحَمُ الرّٰحِمِیۡنَ. Though Job (sws) referred to his pain and suffering, he did not utter the purpose of the supplication and left it to God's mercy. He said that he was afflicted with sorrow and that God is the most merciful among all the merciful. The implication is that he is presenting his grief before God and consigning his matter to Him; whatever God will do will be befitting to His mercy and this will have blessings for Job (sws). It is this state which is called complete contentment on the decisions of God. He who attains this state gains the status of رَاضِيَةً مَّرۡضِيَّةً in the Hereafter. It is very difficult to determine from the trials and circumstances a person passes through in this world if their good outcome is good for a person or vice versa. At times, what he desires is harmful for

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him. For this reason, in all matters in which the beneficial aspect is not determined by God, it is better to consign it to Him. He alone knows whether sickness is better for a person or good health; death is better for him or life.

The Almighty accepted the supplication of Job (sws) mentioned in the words: "I am in distress and you are the Most Merciful among all the merciful." He restored his health and gave him children too. His grandeur and majesty too was given back to him once again. It may be noted that in his supplication, Job (sws) only referred to his physical ailments and not to his wealth and children. Given his circumstances, if he was able to get back his health, he regarded his desire to be more than met. However, God, out of His grace, not only gave him what he desired but far more – something he did not regard himself to be worthy of because of his humility.

It is evident from the words "and restored to him his family too, and as many more with them" that God gathered his family members who had dispersed in this period of trial, replaced those who had died and increased his followers.

The words "from Our special grace and so that this is a reminder for those who worship God" highlight the fact that whatever happened, happened because of God's favour. The circumstances were apparently very hopeless. Neither Job (sws) nor anyone else could have expected them to change in this manner. But God made it happen for His servant. The last part of the sentence shows that God also did this to make this incident a memorable one for those who worship Him: such are His favours on those who attach themselves to Him in all circumstances whether good or bad.

وَاِسۡمٰعِيۡلَ وَاِدۡرِيۡسَ وَذَا الۡكِفۡلِ ؕ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصّٰبِرِيۡنَ ﴿۸۵﴾ وَاَدۡخَلۡنٰهُمۡ فِىۡ رَحۡمَتِنَا ؕ اِنَّهُمۡ مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيۡنَ ﴿۸۶﴾[75]

Ishmael (sws) and Idrīs (sws) have been discussed under verses 54-57 of Sūrah Maryam. The similarity of traits these two prophets have has been alluded to there. Here Dhū al-Kifl has also been mentioned and about all the three is it stated that they were very patient. This shows this was a special quality all three had. The patience exercised by Ishmael (sws) is clearly known: the Qur'ān has alluded to it at several instances. However, nothing is known about the life and times of Idrīs and Dhū al-Kifl. These names are not mentioned in ancient scriptures. Either their pronunciation has been completely changed in Arabic or they have been erased from the previous scriptures and the Qur'ān has actually revived them. This is as far as my humble knowledge is concerned. Some people think that Dhū al-Kifl is actually Ezekiel (sws). However, this opinion can only be relied upon if it is known that he had this title. The names of both these prophets have been introduced through the Qur'ān and patience is a prominent trait of theirs. It should be kept in mind that neither the Qur'ān nor the Torah mentions all the prophets and their life histories. Only God knows all of them.

75. And We also showed favour to Ishmael, Idrīs and Dhū al-Kifl. All these were among the steadfast. And We admitted them into Our mercy. Indeed, they were among the pious.

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وَذَا النُّوْنِ اِذْ ذَّهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ اَنْ لَّنْ نَّقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادٰى فِى الظُّلُمٰتِ اَنْ لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنْتَ سُبْحٰنَكَ ۖ اِنِّىْ كُنْتُ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾[76]

ذَوالنُّوْنِ refers to Jonah (sws). Here he has been mentioned by this title which means "companion of the fish." نُوْن means fish. Since he was swallowed by the fish, he was given this name. This title not only refers to this incident but also has an element of affection in it.

Jonah (sws) was sent as a messenger to the Ninevites. According to Book of Jonah, its population was one hundren and twenty thousand. In verse 147 of Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt, the words used are: مِائَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ (a hundren thousand or even more). This corroborates the Biblical account. He preached among the Ninevites for a long period of time but they turned a deaf ear towards him. Ultimately, his sentiments of honour towards the truth overcame here and being dejected and heartbroken at the cold attitude of his people, he left them. He thought that when he could not penetrate into these stone-hearted people, why should he waste his time on them and face hardships. It was but natural a for truthful person to feel helplesseness and humiliation on the lack of acknowledgement of the truth. However, when Jonah (sws) was overwhelmed by these emotions, he overlooked a very important aspect: when should a God's messenger leave his people? He cannot take this decision on his own. It is God's decision that he must follow in this regard. Only He knows when a nation has become bereft of the ability to accept the truth and when a messenger should declare his acquittal from it and consign it to God's punishment. The established practice of God regarding His messengers has always been that a messenger cannot leave his nation without God's permission even if it is after the life of a messenger and even if not a single person accepts his call. Jonah (sws) could not abide by this stipulation because of his intense regard and love for the truth. He thought that when after a very long time in which he cautioned and warned his nation not a single person had shown any inclination, he had fulfilled his obligation before God and he should consign such a wretched nation to Him and migrate from them. Fulfilling his obligation before God also meant that he did not think that God will hold him accountable for this and in fact thought that he would be delivered from the trial he was passing through.

This thought of Jonah (sws) in itself was based on pure sentiments but the trials which the Almighty has subjected his people to are bound to take their course. After being disenchanted with his nation, he embarked on a ship which was about to set off for a journey. After sailing for sometime, the ship was caught in a storm. When the storm did not blow away, the sailors, in accordance with the general superstition of those times in this regard, thought that a runaway slave had boarded the ship; unless

76. And We showed mercy to the companion of the fish also when being angry with them he left his people and he thought that We shall not question him. Thus he cried out in the layers of darkness: "There is no deity except you. Exalted are you. Indeed, I am at fault."

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he was thrown overboard, they would not be delivered from the storm. Finally lots were cast to find out who this person might be. It is indicated in Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt that it was Jonah (sws) who was given the responsibility of casting lots. The reason for this perhaps would have been that the people of the ship thought that he was the most respectable among them. Nevertheless, lots were cast and it fell upon Jonah (sws) and a result he was thrown into the sea. There a large fish, most probably a whale, swallowed him. However, swallowing God's Messenger is no easy a matter. When Jonah (sws) saw that the way he had adopted to come out of the darkness of his hardships had plunged him into deeper darkness, he uttered that abiding supplication from the bottom of his heart about which it is guaranteed that if it is expressed with sincerity it is always accepted. So the Almighty accepted his supplication and the fish cast him on the sandy shore. There, in order to save his emaciated body from the heat of the sun, the Almighty had grown a pumpkin creeper or some similar plant where he was able to find refuge. When he recovered from this accident and felt some energy in his body, he was directed to go again to the people of Nineveh and warn them of the Hereafter. It is evident from the Book of Jonah in the Bible that the Almighty created an effective means for this: the creeper which had given refuge to Jonah (sws) in its shade suddenly became dry for some reason. People who are grateful to God's favours value the smallest of His favours. When the creeper withered away, it deeply affected Jonah (sws). At this, the Almighty directed his attention to the fact that if he has been aggrieved by the withering away of a trivial creeper in whose cultivation and nourishing he had no role, then he should reflect how can God consign the people of the city of Nineveh to torment who were created and brought up by Him? God then asked him to go again and invite them to His message; it may well be that they listen to this call and become worthy of God's mercy. In accordance with this directive, Jonah (sws) once again went to the people of Nineveh to warn them of the Hereafter. Such was the profound effect of his call that everyone from the common man to the king started to tremble. All of them professed faith in God. The king took off his royal robe and attired himself in sackcloth. He gave a royal decree to the masses that everyone should desist from evil, fast, plead to God and be penitent.

Since our exegetes have made a great mess in reporting the account of Jonah (sws), I have presented the above details to give its true picture. All these details are based on the insinuations and statement of the Bible and the Qur'ān. More details will be found in Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt. With this background, let us now reflect on the components of the verse.

The object of مُغَاضِبًا is suppressed in اِذۡ ذَّهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا because of concomitant indications. The implication is: he left his nation while being sad and angry. Obviously this was due to the fact that he did all that he could to warn them, but they completely ignored him and in fact continued to humiliate the truth and make fun of his message.

The words فَظَنَّ اَنۡ لَّنۡ نَّقۡدِرَ عَلَيۡهِ imply that he thought that in this manner he would be able to deliver himself from the trial his nation had put him through. His zeal and passion for the cause of truth made him overlook the fact that it was the Almighty Who

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had deputed him on this front; if he deserts it without His permission, he could face an even greater trial from God. Found in this sentence is a comment on an aspect of his step that Jonah (sws) forgot but it was concealed in it. He could not for a moment have thought that if he left his nation, he would escape God's accountability. However, he must have thought that after distancing himself from these wretched elements, he would free himself from the affliction he was passing through and would be able to lead his remaining life in peace. This thought in itself is not a sin, but a messenger, as just indicated, is like a soldier deputed at a front. For this reason it is not permitted to him to leave that place on his own even though the motivation might be his love and respect for the cause of truth. If he does something like this, it would mean that he can save himself from God's trial on his own. This hidden aspect was not evident to Jonah (sws). For this reason, it was made plain before him so that its gravity becomes known to him. It should be kept in mind that at times a person takes a very innocent step but it reflects a notion that is not correct. Unless someone wise directs his attention towarrds it, it eludes him. God has unveiled this notion of Jonah (sws) to correct it. This method to correct someone's view is more sagacious. Since messengers of God are an example for all mankind, even a slight deviation from them is checked by God and they are shown how far reaching its consequences can be if it is not stopped.

This interpretation is in consonance with the norms sense and reason and also does not entail any blame on Jonah (sws). Also there remains no need to violate linguistic principles in interpreting لَّنْ نَّقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ, as exegetes have done. The irony is that even after such overthinking, they were not able to solve the difficulty it has.

Here details of the incident encountered by Jonah (sws) in the ship have been suppressed. Only the supplication he uttered in the belly of the fish deep down in the dark sea is mentioned. The Almighty accepted it. The reason for this suppression has already been pointed out earlier: the purpose is not to divulge its details but to show that the gracious God accepts the supplications of His servant in the most hopeless of situations and delivers him from great calamities. The only condition is that the person should regard his Lord to be his guardian and protector and plead before Him only.

In the Book of Jonah of the Bible, this supplication is mentioned in the following words:

> In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry. (Jonah, 2:1)

The plural الظُّلُمٰت signifies the intensity of the darkness and its expansiveness. In the Arabic language, at times a plural denotes vastness. Examples of such plurals are المشارق and المغارب. Here it refers to vastness of the darkness found in the belly of the fish and in the deep sea it was swimming. The purpose is to show that no one should be misled by the fact that God needs a public forum or a radio or a television to

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communicate His mesage. He listens to the cries of His servants in the pitch darkness of the deep sea and responds to them.

Consider next the supplication of Jonah (sws): لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنْتَ سُبْحٰنَكَ ۖ اِنِّيْ كُنْتُ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ. In this supplication, Jonah (sws) has not expressed any desire or demand; he only expressed and confessed his mistake. After this, he left the matter to his Lord accepting that His verdict would be the best and have wisdom and mercy in it because God is absolved of all defects. First of all, he expressed that only God is worthy of worship and obedience and all matters turn to Him. After that, he regarded God to be above and beyond all faults. Then he confessed his mistake that whatever has happened is the consequence of his blemish; he was unjust to his soul and God was never unjust to him.

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهٗ ۙ وَنَجَّيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ ۭ وَكَذٰلِكَ نُـْۨجِي الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝۸۸[77]

Even though Jonah (sws) had not expressed his real desire in his supplication and had just consigned himself to the Almighty, all his stress and sorrow was relieved by the God Who knows the unseen, listens to supplications from the depths of the ocean and knows all secrets. Here the stress and sorrow referred to is not merely the one he had encountered in the ship, it also refers to the situation that made him leave his people. At another instance in the Qur'ān, it is stated that when he preached his nation a second time, all of them embraced faith and the punishment that looked imminent was warned off.

The last part of the verse "and in this way do We deliver the believers" is to bring it in line with the circumstances which prevailed at the time it was revealed in the Qur'ān. Obviously, these incidents have not been narrated without a purpose. They are meant to assure Prophet Muḥammad (sws) and his companions that they must not lose hope however hopeless the circumstances may be. God knows and listens to their supplications and pleadings. He delivers sincere believers from their all sorrows the way He delivered Jonah (sws). A day will come when the dark times they are facing will vanish, the truth will prevail and his nation will embrace the radiance of faith.

وَزَكَرِيَّآ اِذْ نَادٰى رَبَّهٗ رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنِيْ فَرْدًا وَّاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْوٰرِثِيْنَ ۝۸۹ۚ[78]

The account of Zacharias (sws) has been mentioned in detail in Sūrah Maryam. He too supplicated before God in apparently very hopeless circumstances. However, despite these desperate and despondent circumstances, God made possible the impossible. It has been mentioned in Sūrah Maryam that his wife was infertile and he

77. Thereupon, We answered his prayer and relieved him of sorrow. And in this way do We deliver the believers.

78. And We showed favour to Zacharias also when he called out to his Lord: "Lord! Do not leave me by myself and you are the best of all heirs."

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was very old himself. All his relatives were unworthy and totally indifferent to religion. In this situation, he was worried that he had no heir to the legacy of Jacob's progeny he carried with himself and his time might be near. He thus anxiously supplicated before God to not leave him by himself in old age and bless him with an heir who could inherit his legacy and that of Jacob's progeny.

The words "and you are the best of all heirs" do not mean that if he is not given an heir in response to his supplication, then none will remain who would be a follower of God's religion because God's works are dependent on him or his family; on the contrary, He Himself is the best heir of His religion. The implication is that the only objective of his supplication was that he and his family were not deprived of the good fortune of serving His religion they always had. God's tasks are not dependent on him and he can raise anyone to serve His religion.

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهٗ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهٗ يَحْيٰى وَاَصْلَحْنَا لَهٗ زَوْجَهٗ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا يُسٰرِعُوْنَ فِى الْخَيْرٰتِ وَيَدْعُوْنَنَا رَغَبًا وَّرَهَبًا ؕ وَكَانُوْا لَنَا خٰشِعِيْنَ ﴿۹۰﴾[79]

The supplication of Zacharias (sws) had a very noble purpose. He actually wished to be blessed with someone who would serve religion. His legacy did not consist of wealth and assets, it consisted of the religion of Jacob's progeny and wanted this sacred legacy to remain secure. For this reason, his supplication was deemed worthy of acceptance. God gave his infertile wife the ability to bear a child and he was blessed with a celebrated son, John (sws).

Consider the words: "indeed, these people would take the initiative in righteous deeds and would worship Us in every state of hope and despair and would remain submissive to Us." His supplication was accepted by God because people like him were not slaves of worldly desire; they were ones who vie with each other in pious deeds. The reference in "these people" is especially to the family of Zacharias (sws). His paternal family was negligent to religion, as has been explained in Sūrah Maryam. However, those affiliated to him specially were religious. The ailment of running after worldly pleasures was not found in them. In fact, they had the spirit of outdoing each other in righteousness, which was a distinct feature of Jacob's progeny.

His second trait is mentioned as "would worship Us in every state of hope and despair." This is in contrast to the attitude of the Idolaters as well as people who had become slaves to worldly desires. The Qur'ān tells us that when such people face hardships they plead and supplicate at length before God and promise that if their problem is solved they will forever remain sincere to Him. However, when God does the needful, they regard it to be product of their own planning and forget Him as if they had never even called upon Him. It is said that in contrast to these, the ones mentioned in the verse are ones whose character was neither hypocritical nor

79. So, We answered this prayer and blessed him with John and made his wife favourable for him. Indeed, these people would take the initiative in righteous deeds and would worship Us in every state of hope and despair and would remain submissive to Us.

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idolatrous; on the other hand, they called upon God in all circumstances whether in hope or in despair.

The words "would remain submissive to Us" refer to the fact that such people are not ones who would become arrogant if they were blessed with favours and become ungrateful and desperate if they are deprived of them: they are ones who are submissive to God in all circumstances.

وَالَّتِيْٓ اَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ رُّوْحِنَا وَجَعَلْنٰهَا وَابْنَهَآ اٰيَةً لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٩١﴾[80]

This verse refers to Mary (sws) who has been mentioned in detail in Sūrah Maryam. She has not been named here because the attribute that has been stated is so specific that none else but she can implied.

The expression اَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا must not be interpreted literally. The expression اَحْصَنَ فَرْجَهُ is an idiom like سد الثلمة and رتق الفتق etc. In these idioms, the literal meaning of the words is not implied; rather the overall meaning for which they have been coined is implied. Thus اَحْصَنَ فَرْجَهُ would mean تحصن من السوء (he kept himself cleansed from every vice or protected himself from danger). Just as this idiom is used for women, it is also used for men. The word فَرْج in Arabic actually refers to موضع مخافة (place of fear). Examples of this usage can be presented but only they will benefit from these who are well-versed with classical Arabic literature and would not be of any used to the general readers of this exegesis.

The words "so, We blew into her Our Spirit" refer to the fact that God through His special word of command كُن (be) blew His spirit into a child conceived in her womb. Since Jesus (sws) was conceived in this way against general physical and biological laws through this word of command, it has been said that God blew His spirit into him. It is on account of this that the verse goes on to state that Jesus (sws) and his mother are from among the great signs of God. I have explained how they are signs of God. Jesus (sws) himself said the same words about himself as the Qur'ān as stating, as is evident from the Gospels. It is the followers of Paul who have distorted the while incident and given it a new interpretation. I have dealt in detail with these interpolations in the explanation of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān.

اِنَّ هٰذِهٖٓ اُمَّتُكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً ۖ وَّاَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْنِ ﴿٩٢﴾[81]

This is the summary of the whole discussion after a mention of all the prophets. The implication is that if anyone discriminates between the prophets, created innovations

80. And on that [chaste woman] also who guarded her vulnerable organs. So, We blew into her Our Spirit and made her and her son a sign for the people of the world.

81. This community of yours is one community and I only am your Lord. So, worship Me alone.

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in the religion brought by them or adulterated monotheism with polytheism, then the responsibility rests on him. These prophets are absolved from this.

وَتَقَطَّعُوْٓا اَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ كُلٌّ اِلَيْنَا رٰجِعُوْنَ ﴿۹۳﴾[82]

These words sound a threat to the people who had marred God's religion with innovation thus splitting it into pieces and now each group was opposing the religion brought by the prophets in order to support their own ways. The Prophet (sws) is told that he should disregard these people who are opposing him because once they return to God, He will expose their deeds. Nothing will remain hidden.

فَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا كُفْرَانَ لِسَعْيِهٖ ۚ وَاِنَّا لَهٗ كٰتِبُوْنَ ﴿۹۴﴾[83]

Once they return to Him, God will fully reward people who did righteous deeds as long as they adhered to faith and belief in one God. Each and every virtue done by them would have been noted down and there is no possibility that any of their deeds is missed by God. It has been explained at other instances that only those deeds are acceptable to God which are done only for Him while having faith in Him. Deeds not done for Him carry no weight before Him even if they are as profound as migration and *jihād* for His cause.

Section VI: Verses (95-112)

Coming up are the concluding verses of the *sūrah*. Warning people of the Hereafter with which the *sūrah* began is taken up again here. This section commences with very words (اقْتَرَبَ الْوَعْدُ الْحَقُّ) with which the *sūrah* began (اِقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ). In this way, the Qur'ān itself guides us to the coherence found in it. This style is found in most *sūrahs*. My mentor calls it عود علی البدء (return to the beginning). The benefit of this style is that if the real purpose of a *sūrah* is lost in its expanse, it is brought before the addressees once again.

Readers may not proceed to study these verses in this background.

Text and Translation

وَحَرٰمٌ عَلٰي قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَآ اَنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿۹۵﴾ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا فُتِحَتْ يَاْجُوْجُ وَمَاْجُوْجُ وَهُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَّنْسِلُوْنَ ﴿۹۶﴾ وَاقْتَرَبَ الْوَعْدُ الْحَقُّ فَاِذَا هِيَ شَاخِصَةٌ اَبْصَارُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ۭ يٰوَيْلَنَا قَدْ كُنَّا فِيْ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هٰذَا

82. And they tore their religion into pieces. Each has to return to Us.

83. Then he who does righteous deeds and also has faith, his effort will not go waste. We are Ones writing it for him.

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بَلْ كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٩٧﴾ اِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ اَنْتُمْ لَهَا وٰرِدُوْنَ ﴿٩٨﴾ لَوْ كَانَ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اٰلِهَةً
مَّا وَرَدُوْهَا ؕ وَكُلٌّ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٩٩﴾ لَهُمْ فِيْهَا زَفِيْرٌ وَّهُمْ فِيْهَا لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِّنَّا
الْحُسْنٰٓى ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُوْنَ ﴿١٠١﴾ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ حَسِيْسَهَا ۚ وَهُمْ فِيْ مَا اشْتَهَتْ اَنْفُسُهُمْ خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾
لَا يَحْزُنُهُمُ الْفَزَعُ الْاَكْبَرُ وَتَتَلَقّٰىهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ؕ هٰذَا يَوْمُكُمُ الَّذِيْ كُنْتُمْ تُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَآءَ
كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِّ لِلْكُتُبِ ؕ كَمَا بَدَاْنَآ اَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُّعِيْدُهٗ ؕ وَعْدًا عَلَيْنَا ؕ اِنَّا كُنَّا فٰعِلِيْنَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُوْرِ
مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ اَنَّ الْاَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصّٰلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ هٰذَا لَبَلٰغًا لِّقَوْمٍ عٰبِدِيْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَمَآ
اَرْسَلْنٰكَ اِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ قُلْ اِنَّمَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ اَنَّمَآ اِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ۚ فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ فَاِنْ
تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ اٰذَنْتُكُمْ عَلٰى سَوَآءٍ ؕ وَاِنْ اَدْرِيْٓ اَقَرِيْبٌ اَمْ بَعِيْدٌ مَّا تُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ اِنَّهٗ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَ
يَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْتُمُوْنَ ﴿١١٠﴾ وَاِنْ اَدْرِيْ لَعَلَّهٗ فِتْنَةٌ لَّكُمْ وَمَتَاعٌ اِلٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿١١١﴾ قٰلَ رَبِّ احْكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ وَرَبُّنَا
الرَّحْمٰنُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلٰى مَا تَصِفُوْنَ ﴿١١٢﴾

And for whichever settlement We have destined destruction, it is forbidden for them to turn to the truth. They shall never turn [to it] until that time arrives when Gog and Magog are let loose and they launch an onslaught from every high place. (95-96)

And the true promise of the Day of Judgement has drawn near; then all of a sudden those who have disbelieved will stare in astonishment. They will cry out: "Woe be to us! We remained in this state of negligence. In fact, it is we who were unjust to our selves." (97)

Now you and your deities that you have been worshipping instead of God will become the firewood of Hell. You shall certainly enter it. Had they been deities, they would not have entered it and now all shall remain in it forever. These worshippers are to cry out in it, and such will be the situation of these deities that they will hear nothing in it. (98-100)

However, those who have been promised a good fate by Us shall be kept away from it. They shall not even listen to its sound and shall forever remain in the bliss they desire. That great commotion of that day shall not afflict them with grief and the angels will welcome them. They will say: "This is that day of yours which you were being promised of." (101-103)

Bear in mind the day when We shall roll up the sky the way pages are rolled up in a scroll. The way We began the first creation, in the same way, We shall do it again. This is a definite promise that We are responsible for. Indeed, We are certain to do it. (104)

And We have written in the Psalms after the piece of advice that the earth shall only

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be inherited by My righteous servants. Indeed, in it is great awareness for those who worship. And We have only sent you as a mercy for the people of the world. Say: It is this which is only divinely revealed to me: Your God is one God. So, do you submit yourselves to Him? Then if they turn away, say: I have warned all of you equally. Now I do not know whether that time you are being promised is near or far off. Indeed, He alone knows the words said openly and those also that you conceal. And I do not know whether perhaps this time is a trial for you and a respite to gain benefit. (105-111)

He prayed: My Lord! Judge with fairness, and Our Lord is the Most Merciful from whom help is requested against what you say. (112)

Explanation

وَحَرٰمٌ عَلٰى قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَآ اَنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾[84]

A part of this verse is suppressed according to common linguistic styles of Arabic. It is explained by the words: اَنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُوْنَ . Thus the overall implication would be:

وَحَرٰمٌ عَلٰى قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَآ اَنْ يَّرْجِعُوا اَنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُوْنَ

Many examples of similar suppressions can be seen in the earlier *sūrahs* of this exegesis. Here the verb اَهْلَكْنٰهَآ connotes decision. At times, when the certainty of an incident or matter is to be expressed, it is stated as if it has already happened.

The verb رجع means "withdrawing from falsehood and turning towards the truth."

In this verse, the Prophet (sws) is stopped from being anxious about the faith of the miscreants of Quraysh. He is told that they are now facing an established practice of God. Just as the previous nations were destroyed and did not embrace faith after the utmost efforts of their respective prophets, in a similar way, it is now become impossible for these people to accept faith. God's torment has become destined for them because of their stubbornness. The implication is that the Prophet (sws) should stop worrying about them and consign their matter to God. Earlier, in verse 6 of this *sūrah*, this topic was discussed thus:

مَآ اٰمَنَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَا ۚ اَفَهُمْ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ

Before them, none of the people of the settlements We destroyed professed faith; so, will they profess faith?

84. And for whichever settlement We have destined destruction, it is forbidden for them to turn to the truth. They shall never turn [to it].

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حَتّٰٓى اِذَا فُتِحَتْ يَاْجُوْجُ وَمَاْجُوْجُ وَهُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَّنْسِلُوْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾[85]

Gog and Magog have been discussed in detail under verses 98-99 of Sūrah al-Kahf. It is evident from the Qur'ān that near the Day of Judgement, Gog and Magog will launch an onslaught from all sides and the whole world will be filled with disorder. How exactly will this happen is something known only to God. Here the reason that they are mentioned is that the Prophet (sws) should not waste any further time on these people who want to see various signs to accept faith. These people are not ones who can be convinced by the arguments presented by the Qur'ān that are based on human nature and intellect; they will only accept faith when the Day of Judgement will stare them in the eye – when professing faith will be of no use.

وَاقْتَرَبَ الْوَعْدُ الْحَقُّ فَاِذَا هِيَ شَاخِصَةٌ اَبْصَارُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ؕ يٰوَيْلَنَا قَدْ كُنَّا فِيْ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هٰذَا بَلْ كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٩٧﴾[86]

The implication of this verse is that the promise of the Day of Judgement they regard far-off is not so. The time of its arrival is very near. In verses 6-7 of Sūrah al-Ma'ārij, it is said: وَّنَرٰىهُ قَرِيْبًا اِنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَهٗ بَعِيْدًا (they regard it to be far off, and We see it very near at hand). The fact is that human beings measure time by their own short standards and thus think that the Day of Judgement is far-off. By God's measurement standards, it is very near. This topic has also been discussed in 1 verse of this *sūrah*. There some other aspects too were explained. Readers may look it up.

The words "then all of a sudden those who have disbelieved will stare in astonishment" depict its unexpected arrival. Such will be its horrific nature that that people who today are stubbornly demanding its arrival and making fun of it will be struck with fear and consternation. Whenever a person sees something suddenly, he keeps staring at it in amazement.

The words يٰوَيْلَنَا قَدْ كُنَّا فِيْ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هٰذَا بَلْ كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ portray the situation they will be faced with. The word قَالُوْا (they said) is suppressed here. They will confess that it was not that no one came to awaken them from their slumber of indifference; on the contrary, God did send people for this purpose who did their utmost to awaken them but it was they themselves who were unjust to their souls and kept making fun of the warnings sounded to them. It may be kept in mind that the real impediment in believing in the Day of Judgement is not that it is does not have a convincing argument in its favour; the real impediment is the indifference of people. A person does not want to believe in it in spite of being explained these arguments because this is something that conflicts

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85. Until that time arrives when Gog and Magog are let loose and they launch an onslaught from every high place.

86. And the true promise of the Day of Judgement has drawn near; then all of a sudden those who have disbelieved will stare in astonishment. They will cry out: "Woe be to us! We remained in this state of negligence. In fact, it is we who were unjust to our selves."

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with his desires. In such a situation, the sole thing that can support him is indifference. He remains in this state and continues to defer his preparation for it until one day it will suddenly stare him in the eye.

اِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ اَنْتُمْ لَهَا وٰرِدُوْنَ ﴿۹۸﴾[87]

In other words, this confession will be of no use to them. The words "You shall certainly enter it" imply that whether they plead or cry, they will have to encounter the destructive pit of Hell. There is no escape from it.

The letter مَا in the words وَمَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ indicates that they refer to the idols and stones the Idolaters used to worship. The use of مَا for non-living objects is common. The purpose of making these idols into the fuel of Hell is obviously not to punish them; it is, in fact, to show their worshippers the horrible fate of their deities. In the first place idols like Lāt, Manāt, 'Uzzā and Ḥabl which the Idolaters worshipped were mere hypothetical names that they had invented and did not exist in reality. Moreover, they would worship them in the form of stone idols. The fate of some polytheistic nations who used to worship prophets and righteous individuals is not mentioned here. It is described at certain other instances in the Qur'ān. Thus, for example, the Christians worship Jesus (sws). Details of the testimony that will be borne against them by Jesus (sws) is mentioned in Sūrah al-Mā'idah. In a similar way, other prophets and righteous individuals will declare their acquittal from their worshippers on the Day of Judgement. They will express their ignorance of being worshipped and go on to say that if their worshippers have indulged in this foolishness, they should bear its consequences; they never told them to worship them.

لَوْ كَانَ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اٰلِهَةً مَّا وَرَدُوْهَا ؕ وَكُلٌّ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿۹۹﴾[88]

Stated in this verse is the reason for which these idols would be cast into Hell. It has been indicated earlier that the reason for consigning them to Hell is to show the horrible fate their deities would encounter. This would be extreme humiliation for those who were the last hope of all their desires. They will see how helpless they are like their own selves and how they and their deities both will face punishment.

The words "and now all shall remain in it forever" imply that both the worshippers and the worshipped will eternally remain together in Hell.

Concomitant indications show that the first part of this verse will be directly addressed to them and the second one is a declaration of their permanent fate.

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87. Now you and your deities that you have been worshipping instead of God will become the firewood of Hell. You shall certainly enter it.

88. Had they been deities, they would not have entered it and now all shall remain in it forever.

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لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَّهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾[89]

The word زَفِيرٌ means "pleadings and crying." The pronoun هُمْ in the first sentence is for the worshippers and in the second for the idols. On first sight, this may seem that there is an ambiguity in the antecedents in both mentions of this pronoun. However, as has been indicated in the light of several examples earlier on, this ambiguity is a shortcoming when there is a chance that it actually exists. If there is no such chance and the antecedents can be definitively determined, then this cannot be regarded a shortcoming. It in fact imparts brevity to the discourse. Here there is actually no such possibility of ambiguity. The verse implies that worshippers will cry and plead in Hell and the mere stones they regarded as deities and worshipped will not even know that they were being worshipped and sought help from. This topic is discussed at other instances in the Qur'ān too in different styles: the companions of Hell will implore for help but none will be there to help them.

It is possible that in the second part, someone thinks that verb and pronoun mentioned are ones that are used for living beings, so how can they be used for stones and idols? The answer to this question is that they are used with reference to the opinion of the worshippers: they considered these stones to hear their pleadings. Many examples of such usage can be seen in classical Arabic literature and in the Qur'ān.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِّنَّا الْحُسْنٰٓى ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُوْنَ ﴿١٠١﴾[90]

The noun qualified by the verb الْحُسْنٰى is suppressed. The implication is that those who have already been promised a good fate by God will be kept away from Hell. The promise of this good fate has been mentioned earlier in verse 94. There it was said: "Then he who does righteous deeds and also has faith, his effort will not go waste. We are Ones writing it for him."

لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ حَسِيْسَهَا ۚ وَهُمْ فِيْ مَا اشْتَهَتْ اَنْفُسُهُمْ خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾[91]

This verse clearly refutes the opinion of those people who, after not being able to correctly determine the address in verse 71 of Sūrah Maryam,[92] think that once every person including the believers will have to pass over Hell. Readers may look up my explanation.

If a person does not have the freedom to alter and adapt the luxuries provided to him,

89. These worshippers are to cry out in it, and such will be the situation of these deities that they will hear nothing in it.

90. However, those who have been promised a good fate by Us shall be kept away from it.

91. They shall not even listen to its sound and shall forever remain in the bliss they desire.

92. وَاِنْ مِّنْكُمْ اِلَّا وَارِدُهَا (and there will be none among you who will not pass by it).

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their monotony will bore him and he will desire for some new surroundings for his entertainment and amusement. Human beings are species who have a will and intention. For this reason, they prefer the greatest of bliss on their own conditions. To give due regard to this requirement of their nature, the Almighty has made Paradise for the believers in such a way that they can create variety according to what they desire. Not the slightest hindrance will be a barrier to any of their wishes. Obviously, this eternal bliss and creation of diversity whenever desired is something which the greatest of emperors ruling this world neither had nor can ever have. At another instances, this fact is illustrated by verse 108 of Sūrah al-Kahf: لَا يَبْغُونَ عَنْهَا حِوَلًا (the companions of Paradise would not like to leave their Paradise)

لَا يَحْزُنُهُمُ الْفَزَعُ الْأَكْبَرُ وَتَتَلَقّٰهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ۭ هٰذَا يَوْمُكُمُ الَّذِيْ كُنْتُمْ تُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾[93]

The expression الْفَزَعُ الْأَكْبَرُ refers to the great upheaval that will take place in the whole universe once the trumpet is blown. The Qur'ān has portrayed it at various instances. In particular, the *sūrahs* of the last chapter have depicted it in such a way that if person has insight, he can actually observe it with his eyes. The words "then all of a sudden those who have disbelieved will stare in astonishment" of verse 97 are pointing towards it.

يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاۗءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِّ لِلْكُتُبِ ۭ كَمَا بَدَاْنَآ اَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُّعِيْدُهٗ ۭ وَعْدًا عَلَيْنَا ۭ اِنَّا كُنَّا فٰعِلِيْنَ ﴿١٠٤﴾[94]

The word السِّجِلُّ refers to the scroll or register in which written pages are preserved. The word كُتُبٌ here means "written pages" and اَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ is grammatically a locus. The expression اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ is also used in the Qur'ān at various instances to convey this meaning.

The participle in وَعْدًا عَلَيْنَا is for emphasis, ie it is a certain promise from God, as is indicated earlier by the words الَّذِيْ كُنْتُمْ تُوْعَدُوْنَ.

The words "indeed, We are certain to do it" imply that no one should think that they are being sounded a bluff. This promise shall be fulfilled by God come what may; He has decided it and it is very easy a task for Him.

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُوْرِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ اَنَّ الْاَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصّٰلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾[95]

This verse refers to the Psalms. Though it has been mentioned at various instances

93. That great commotion of that day shall not afflict them with grief and the angels will welcome them. They will say: "This is that day of yours which you were being promised of."

94. Bear in mind the day when We shall roll up the sky the way pages are rolled up in a scroll. The way We began the first creation, in the same way, We shall do it again. This is a definite promise that We are responsible for. Indeed, We are certain to do it.

95. And We have written in the Psalms after the piece of advice that the earth shall only be inherited by My righteous servants.

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in it that the earth shall be inherited by the righteous servants of God, yet chapter 37 is especially dedicated to this one fact. For this reason, reproduced below is the chapter in full so that the veracity of the Qur'ān's reference becomes evident and it also becomes clear which "earth" is being referred to here. Moreover, the true meaning of مِنۢ بَعۡدِ الذِّكۡرِ is also evident and it becomes known that what is being alluded to by the word الذِّكۡر.

In the following pages, first the complete chapter shall be cited and the individual components of the verse that specially need elucidation will be explained.

[1] Do not fret because of those who are evil
or be envious of those who do wrong;
[2] for like the grass they will soon wither,
like green plants they will soon die away.
[3] Trust in the LORD and do good;
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
[4] Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
[5] Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in him and he will do this:
[6] He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn,
your vindication like the noonday sun.
[7] Be still before the LORD
and wait patiently for him;
do not fret when people succeed in their ways,
when they carry out their wicked schemes.
[8] Refrain from anger and turn from wrath;
do not fret—it leads only to evil.
[9] For those who are evil will be destroyed,
but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.
[10] A little while, and the wicked will be no more;
though you look for them, they will not be found.
[11] But the meek will inherit the land
and enjoy peace and prosperity.
[12] The wicked plot against the righteous
and gnash their teeth at them;
[13] but the Lord laughs at the wicked,
for he knows their day is coming.
[14] The wicked draw the sword
and bend the bow
to bring down the poor and needy,
to slay those whose ways are upright.

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15 But their swords will pierce their own hearts,
and their bows will be broken.
16 Better the little that the righteous have
than the wealth of many wicked;
17 for the power of the wicked will be broken,
but the LORD upholds the righteous.
18 The blameless spend their days under the LORD's care,
and their inheritance will endure forever.
19 In times of disaster they will not wither;
in days of famine they will enjoy plenty.
20 But the wicked will perish:
Though the LORD's enemies are like the flowers of the field,
they will be consumed, they will go up in smoke.
21 The wicked borrow and do not repay,
but the righteous give generously;
22 those the LORD blesses will inherit the land,
but those he curses will be destroyed.
23 The LORD makes firm the steps
of the one who delights in him;
24 though he may stumble, he will not fall,
for the LORD upholds him with his hand.
25 I was young and now I am old,
yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken
or their children begging bread.
26 They are always generous and lend freely;
their children will be a blessing.
27 Turn from evil and do good;
then you will dwell in the land forever.
28 For the LORD loves the just
and will not forsake his faithful ones.
They will be protected forever.[96]

Wrongdoers will be completely destroyed;
the offspring of the wicked will perish.
29 The righteous will inherit the land
and dwell in it forever.
30 The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom,
and their tongues speak what is just.

96. See Septuagint; Hebrew *They will be protected forever.*

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31 The law of their God is in their hearts;
their feet do not slip.
32 The wicked lie in wait for the righteous,
intent on putting them to death;
33 but the LORD will not leave them in the power of the wicked
or let them be condemned when brought to trial.
34 Hope in the LORD
and keep his way.
He will exalt you to inherit the land;
when the wicked are destroyed, you will see it.
35 I have seen a wicked and ruthless man
flourishing like a luxuriant native tree,
36 but he soon passed away and was no more;
though I looked for him, he could not be found.
37 Consider the blameless, observe the upright;
a future awaits those who seek peace.
38 But all sinners will be destroyed;
there will be no future for the wicked.
39 The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD;
he is their stronghold in time of trouble.
40 The LORD helps them and delivers them;
he delivers them from the wicked and saves them,
because they take refuge in him.

In my opinion, it is to this Psalm that the Qur'ān has referred here. If it is reflected upon, one can clearly see that it is in the form of discrete stanzas in which words of counsel are sounded first and then a repetitive verse occurs "the land and country shall be inherited by the pious and righteous servants of God." This style can be seen in the Qur'ān as well in Sūrah al-Raḥmān where the verse is repeated.

If the underlined sentences are deliberated upon, it will become evident that the inheritance of the land they speak about is eternal. Thus for example, it is said:

And their inheritance will endure forever (18)
Then you will dwell in the land forever (27)
They will be protected forever (28)
The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever (29)

Obviously, these glad tidings of an eternal kingdom cannot relate to this earth which we inhabit. Neither are any of its things eternal nor is its inheritance specific for the righteous. On the contrary, this earth and all of its things are mortal and God has given respite in it to both the righteous and the wicked. After that, the heavens and the earth

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both will be destroyed and a new world will be born with new laws. It would be eternally inherited by the righteous and the wrong doers would be cast into Hell.

Precisely the same inference is validated by the Qur'ān. Earlier in verse 104, it is pointed out that one day the Almighty will destroy this sky. In verse 48 of Sūrah Ibrāhīm, it is stated: يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْاَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْاَرْضِ وَالسَّمٰوٰتُ (keep in mind the day when the earth is changed into a different earth and the heavens also). In the new earth and sky created, the law undoubtedly would be that they will eternally belong to the righteous. The wrongdoers will have no share in it. This is evident not just from the Psalms and the Qur'ān, it is also evident from all divine scriptures and from the teachings of all the prophets and messengers of God.

It is this reality which the Qur'ān explains with reference to the Psalms in the verse under discussion. The Psalms are a collection of hymns revealed to David (sws). As has been mentioned in this *sūrah*, he was a prophet as well as an illustrious king. A declaration that the real and final kingdom of the earth will belong only to the righteous would have been the most effective from the mouth of a prophet. When a mighty king makes such a proclamation, who else can dare say anything else.

After this explanation, consider now the components of the verse.

It is evident with reference to Psalm 37 cited earlier that the teaching of the Psalms which the Qur'ān has alluded to here has been explained in detail in a very moving way. It has also become evident that the real fact stated occurs in the form of a repetitive verse with words of counsel and lofty instruction being sounded before it. This is referred to by the Qur'ān as مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ. The importance of this reference is that in fact it is these words of counsel which guarantee an eternal kingdom in the Hereafter.

The real thing for which the Qur'ān has alluded to the Psalms is referred to by the words "that the earth shall only be inherited by My righteous servants." It is evident from the portion of the Psalms cited that the earth mentioned in this verse refers to the earth that will be brought into existence in the Hereafter and whose inheritance will solely be meant for the righteous servants of God.

اِنَّ فِيْ هٰذَا لَبَلٰغًا لِّقَوْمٍ عٰبِدِيْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾[97]

The word بَلٰغ here encompasses the meanings of general declaration and general glad tidings. It is undefined to magnify it. The implication is that it is God's verdict that the inheritors of the new earth will only be the righteous servants of God. This constitutes huge glad tidings for those who worship Him. So people should try to struggle to their best for the Hereafter. They should not sacrifice it for the life of few days of this world.

97. Indeed, in it is great awareness for those who worship.

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وَمَآ اَرۡسَلۡنٰكَ اِلَّا رَحۡمَةً لِّلۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿۱۰۷﴾[98]

The implication of the verse is that God has sent the Prophet (sws) as a mercy for mankind to deliver glad tidings and warnings to people. He should inform them of this reality. His sole responsibility is dissemination and proclamation and should try to carry it out. As for the arrogant who make fun of his warnings and demand to see the promised doom, he should tell them that God has sent him as a mercy to them and not as a punishment. He should tell them that he is unaware of its time of arrival. Only God has its knowledge.

قُلۡ اِنَّمَا يُوۡحٰٓى اِلَىَّ اَنَّمَآ اِلٰهُكُمۡ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ‌ ۚ فَهَلۡ اَنۡتُمۡ مُّسۡلِمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰۸﴾[99]

The last part of the verse carries a vehement warning: are these people willing to consign themselves to the powerful and ever-existing God or not? The implication is that the Prophet (sws) has done his duty and now it is their responsibility; if they continue to be stubborn and make fun of him at the backing of their idols and deities, he is absolved of his responsibility towards them. The responsibility of the consequences now rests with them.

فَاِنۡ تَوَلَّوۡا فَقُلۡ اٰذَنۡتُكُمۡ عَلٰى سَوَآءٍ‌ ؕ وَاِنۡ اَدۡرِىۡۤ اَقَرِيۡبٌ اَمۡ بَعِيۡدٌ مَّا تُوۡعَدُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰۹﴾[100]

The implication of the verse is that if even after this decisive warning they persist with their attitude of evasion, the Prophet (sws) should tell them that he has informed their leaders and their followers, the prominent and the ordinary, the rich and the poor all about the imminent danger. None of them can now present the excuse that he had not been warned. As for the time of this danger to materialize, he is not aware of it. Only God – on whose directive he is warning them – knows it.

اِنَّهٗ يَعۡلَمُ الۡجَهۡرَ مِنَ الۡقَوۡلِ وَيَعۡلَمُ مَا تَكۡتُمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱۰﴾[101]

This is a very comprehensive and eloquent verse. The implication is that when God knows the hidden and the known aspects of peoples' lives, they should consign their matter to him. He will do what His wisdom entails. He knows the demand they are making from the Prophet (sws) as well as its reason.

It may be kept in mind that those who were demanding the punishment from the

98. And We have only sent you as a mercy for the people of the world.

99. Say: It is this which is only divinely revealed to me: Your God is one God. So, do you submit yourselves to Him?

100. Then if they turn away, say: I have warned all of you equally. Now I do not know whether that time you are being promised is near or far off.

101. Indeed, He alone knows the words said openly and those also that you conceal.

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Prophet (sws) were not doing it because they thought that it was a bluff or that he was lying to them. They only did so to annoy and pester him and to deceive their masses. It is while referring to this fact that it has been said that they should not think that God is unaware of the secrets of their hearts. He fully knows them and for this reason the Prophet (sws) is not worried at their demand. He fully trusts God's knowledge and wisdom.

وَاِنۡ اَدۡرِیۡ لَعَلَّهٗ فِتۡنَةٌ لَّكُمۡ وَمَتَاعٌ اِلٰی حِیۡنٍ ﴿۱۱۱﴾[102]

The antecedent of the pronoun in لَعَلَّهٗ is the "delayed promise" indicated in the previous verse. In other words, it is being said that if this promise is being deferred, the Prophet (sws) does not know the reason for it. Only God knows it. It may well be a trial for them so that the truth is conclusively communicated to them. It can also be that God wants them to have some more time to eat and enjoy. Whatever the reason, it should not be a cause of arrogance for them. On the contrary, they should try to benefit from it. If it is the first case, they should hurry and repent and in case of the second, they should be grateful to God.

قٰلَ رَبِّ احۡكُمۡ بِالۡحَقِّ ؕ وَرَبُّنَا الرَّحۡمٰنُ الۡمُسۡتَعَانُ عَلٰی مَا تَصِفُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱۲﴾[103]

This verse is both a supplication from the Prophet (sws) and also a farewell to the enemies. God accepted his supplication and the Prophet bade farewell to his enemies by expressing the fact that he only seeks help from God on what they say and do because He is the real helper.

With these words, the explanation of this *sūrah* comes to its completion. فالحمد لله علی ذالک (gratitude be to God on this).

Raḥmānābād
18th March 1973

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[102]. And I do not know whether perhaps this time is a trial for you and a respite to gain benefit.

[103]. He prayed: My Lord! Judge with fairness, and Our Lord is the Most Merciful from whom help is requested against what you say.

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Sūrah al-Ḥajj

Theme and Time of Revelation

This *sūrah* is among the last of the Makkan ones revealed when Muslims were being forced to migrate to other areas as a result of being subjected to persecution by the Quraysh. The time of the Prophet's migration too had drawn near. It was in those times that this *sūrah* was revealed with a final warning for the Quraysh. They are warned of God's wrath, and monotheism and the certainty of the Day of Judgement is corroborated through convincing arguments. Moreover, in the light of Abraham's preaching and of the purpose for which the House of God was built, they are explained that its actual worthy custodians are not the Idolaters but the Muslims whom they have deprived of it and oppressing and persecuting them to expel them from it. The conquest of Makkah has been hinted in verse 44 of the previous *sūrah*. In this *sūrah*, this hint has assumed the form of a decisive verdict. The Quraysh are regarded as traitors and usurpers and threatened with expulsion from this House and Muslims are given glad tidings that God will protect them and after expelling the Quraysh make them as its custodians.

This is *sūrah* is Makkan, as is evident from its tone and contents. Only four of its verses (38-41) were revealed after migration to Madīnah. In these verses, Muslims are permitted to take up arms in defence if the disbelievers of the Quraysh try to forcibly stop them from doing *ḥajj*. God will help them. Since this stipulation is an explanation to what is stated earlier, these verses were placed here. The purpose is that the wisdom of this permission becomes evident: Muslims have a right to take up arms because the occupation of the Quraysh over the House of God was an act of usurpation. Its real custodians are the Muslims and not the Quraysh.

It is because of these few verses that our exegetes have differed about the place of revelation of the *sūrah*: whether it was Makkah or Madīnah. However, if a few Madīnan verses are inserted in a Makkan *sūrah* – and the nature too of these verses is that of an explanation – then this does not make the whole *sūrah* into a Madīnan one. There are some Madīnan verses in Sūrah al-Muzzammil too even though there is a consensus that it is a Makkan *sūrah*. It will be explained ahead that these verses are like that of a stipulation of premise that was stated concisely. When something that was stated in the last phase of the Makkan period was explained in verses revealed in the early Madīnan period, then were both these set of verses were placed adjacent to

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one another. Zamakhasharī too has regarded this *sūrah*, with the exception of a few verses, to be Makkan.[1]

Analysis of the Meanings

Verses (1-4): The opponents of the Qur'ān are warned of God's grasp and of the horrors of the torment in the Hereafter. Becoming neglectful of the Hereafter and following Satan as a result of associating partners with God without any basis is a call for doom. Satan's real task, for which God has given him respite, is not to provide guidance so that people follow him. He is in fact leading all those wretched people who follow him to the fire of Hell.

Verses (5-8): Arguments in favour of the Hereafter are cited by referring to phases of creation of a human being and by the phenomenon of earth's revival to life after a dry spell. The purpose is to urge people who are in doubt regarding the Hereafter and have become indifferent to it who are neither reflecting on the nature and wisdom of their creation nor on the world around them. They are urged to open their eyes to the signs within them and in the world around them instead of demanding to observe the torment. The advent of the Hereafter is an obvious and necessary consequence of God's attributes. It is destined to come without doubt.

Verses (9-16): Because of reliance on their alleged deities and intercessors, people who were indifferent to the Hereafter and wanted to always argue and dispute with the Prophet (sws) in support of polytheism are taken to task and refuted. It is explained that the claim of worshipping God while associating partners with Him is a baseless one. God does not give any importance to such hypocrites who want to worship and obey Him as long as they receive its apparent benefits and flee away from Him at the time of trial and knock at the doors of others. These are the people who will procure loss both in this world and the next. The harm of those to whom they run for their benefits while leaving God is more than their use. It is only God Who has the authority to harm or benefit people. If someone loses hope in God, he can try to reach the heavens if the greatest of his schemes can solve this problem.

Verses (17-24): Muslims are assured, and all groups who were opposing Islam are informed that God is aware of everyone's behaviour. None of a person's word or deed is hidden from Him. Ultimately, everyone's case will be referred to His court of justice. One the one hand will be those who today are calling others to monotheism and the truth. On the other hand will be those who had distorted the face of religion by their religious innovations. Then God will deliver His verdict for both. He will admit into Hell all those guilty of polytheism and disbelief. As for those who adhered to monotheism and faith, they will benefit from the luxuries of Paradise.

Verses (25-37): The real objective of Abraham's (sws) religion and of building the House of God is explained. The purpose of this explanation is to make it clear to the

1. Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 3, 142.

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Idolaters and their supporters among the People of the Book that they are under a grave self-delusion: they think that it is they who are the real custodians of Abraham's religion and the House of God and hence have the right to close its doors to the Prophet (sws) and his followers. Abraham (sws) never built this House for idolatry and polytheism. On the other hand, they have precisely done this. Abraham (sws) had built it for worshipping the one and only God and for the purpose of the ritual of *ḥajj*. In this regard, attention is directed to the real essence of animal sacrifice and other rituals of *ḥajj* to urge these claimants of Abraham's legacy to evaluate their beliefs. They should do some soul searching in this regard because they have totally distorted his legacy and his teachings. To make matters worse, they are bent upon expelling those who are trying to revive this legacy.

Verses (38-41): These four verses are Madīnan. Once Muslims migrated to Madīnah, the question arose as to what they should do if they go for *ḥajj* and the disbelievers try to stop them? This question carried great significance because waging war in the sacred months and that too within the vicinity of the House of God was regarded as prohibited even in the times of *jāhiliyyah*. The Quraysh were using the sacred months and the sanctity of the House of God as a shield and Muslims too would dare not defy this prohibition unless they were permitted by God. Ultimately, God gave this permission to the Muslims: if such a war becomes inevitable, they too can retaliate. This war does not violate the sanctity of the sacred months; in fact, it is a holy war for the cleansing of the House of God and if Muslims have the power, it is their obligation to liberate the House of God from its unworthy occupiers who are actually usurpers. At the same time, it is clarified that if such wars are also considered against piety, then it would mean that all houses of worship that have been built for the One God are being consigned to the disbelievers and their accomplices. The consequence would be that these wretched elements would either raze them to the ground or convert them into centres of idol-worship. For this reason, Muslims should neither hesitate in waging this war nor give any importance to the accusations of their adversaries. If such a war becomes imminent, then in spite of their small number and scarcity of resources, God will help them to grant them authority in the land of Makkah. And when this happens, they should cleanse the Ḥaram from the filth of polytheism and disbelief and revive the objectives for which Abraham (sws) had made them inhabit this land.

This permission of cleansing the House of God was an essential consequence of what is stated in the previous section of verses: the Quraysh were unworthy custodians of the House of God and their occupation of this House was illegal for they had distorted its objectives. For this reason, though these four verses were revealed in Madīnah, they were placed here in a Makkan *sūrah* so that it becomes evident that this permission was given because of the prevailing circumstances.

Verses (42-52): Evidence from history is cited that the warning meted out by God to various nations through His messengers always materialized. None of the nations

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could survive on this earth after denying its respective messenger. The only thing left intact were the remnants of the magnificent buildings they built. They are enough to learn a lesson from if a person has the eye. However, no healer can cure people whose hearts have become blind. People who were demanding from the Prophet (sws) to hasten the promised doom are told that the God's calendar of events is different from theirs. His one day is equal to a thousand earth years. For this reason, they should not ask to hasten this doom. God's promise is destined to be fulfilled. Just as God has given respite to previous nations, he gave them respite too. So just as these nations were punished, they too will meet the same fate if they do not desist from their obduracy. The purpose of a Messenger is to warn people and deliver them glad tidings. The decision to send punishment is in the Hands of God.

Verses (53-57): The Prophet (sws) is assured that the tough opposition he his facing against his call is nothing new. Every messenger passed through these circumstances. Whenever a prophet or a messenger has tried to show courage against these adversities and reform affairs, devils have always tried to impede this and tried to create hurdles. However, God always obliterates the effects of Satan's whisperings and makes His word prevail. The reason that God has given these devils this opportunity is to distinguish true believers from false claimants. The faith of seekers of the truth blossoms as a result of such propaganda by Satan and the hypocrites and the wretched go even more astray. Ultimately, God decides the fate of both. The former enter Paradise after this trial and the latter become the fuel of Hell.

Verses (58-64): Glad tidings of success in both this world and the next are given to people who had migrated by that time or were preparing to do so. These glad tidings are corroborated by God's attributes and by His signs in the world around human beings.

Verses (65-70): The wisdom behind granting respite to the disbelievers in spite of their demand for punishment is referred to: God shows haste in mercy and defers torment. The Prophet (sws) is directed to consign their matter to God. He will decide their fate in the Hereafter and this is very easy for Him.

Verses (71-76): A final strike is made at the baseless concepts of polytheism and intercession. The purpose is that the Idolaters clearly know that the deities and intercessors on the basis of whom they are unmindful of the Hereafter will not be of the slightest benefit to them in the court of God.

Verses (77-78): In these concluding verses, Muslims are addressed collectively and are directed to wage war for the cause of God. They are told that they are now the inheritors of Abraham's religion. God has given them the title of Muslims. It is now their responsibility to bear witness to the truth before other people just as the messenger has borne this witness before them. They should be diligent in the prayer and hold fast to God. He is their guardian and best of helpers.

This analysis of the meanings suffices to explain its whole sequence and coherence of the *sūrah*. We now, in the name of God and by His grace, begin its explanation.

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Text and Translation

Section I: Verses (1-4)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

یٰۤاَیُّہَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوۡا رَبَّکُمۡ ۚ اِنَّ زَلۡزَلَۃَ السَّاعَۃِ شَیۡءٌ عَظِیۡمٌ ﴿۱﴾ یَوۡمَ تَرَوۡنَہَا تَذۡہَلُ کُلُّ مُرۡضِعَۃٍ عَمَّاۤ اَرۡضَعَتۡ وَ تَضَعُ کُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمۡلٍ حَمۡلَہَا وَ تَرَی النَّاسَ سُکٰرٰی وَ مَا ہُمۡ بِسُکٰرٰی وَ لٰکِنَّ عَذَابَ اللّٰہِ شَدِیۡدٌ ﴿۲﴾ وَ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَنۡ یُّجَادِلُ فِی اللّٰہِ بِغَیۡرِ عِلۡمٍ وَّ یَتَّبِعُ کُلَّ شَیۡطٰنٍ مَّرِیۡدٍ ﴿۳﴾ کُتِبَ عَلَیۡہِ اَنَّہٗ مَنۡ تَوَلَّاہُ فَاَنَّہٗ یُضِلُّہٗ وَ یَہۡدِیۡہِ اِلٰی عَذَابِ السَّعِیۡرِ ﴿۴﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

O People! Fear your Lord. Indeed, the upheaval of the Day of Judgement is a very horrific thing. The day you will see it, every suckling mother will forget her suckled child and every pregnant being will shed her burden and you will see people inebriated even though they will not be inebriated. In fact, the torment of God is a very terrible thing. (1-2)

And there are those among people who without having any knowledge dispute about God's oneness and follow every rebellious wretched devil. About whom it has been ordained that whoever befriends him, he will lead him astray and guide him to the torment of Hell. (3-4)

Explanation

یٰۤاَیُّہَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوۡا رَبَّکُمۡ ۚ اِنَّ زَلۡزَلَۃَ السَّاعَۃِ شَیۡءٌ عَظِیۡمٌ ﴿۱﴾[2]

Though the words "O People" are general, they refer to the arrogant Quraysh who were denying the Day of Judgement, and demanding from the Prophet (sws) to hasten the punishment. They should fear God and benefit from the respite He has graciously given them. Out of His mercy, He may give time to people, but when He seizes them for their evils, harsh is His accountability. They should not think that the Day of Judgement is an easy affair so that they demand to hasten its arrival. Its cataclysm will be horrific. Refuge should be sought from it instead of asking for it.

یَوۡمَ تَرَوۡنَہَا تَذۡہَلُ کُلُّ مُرۡضِعَۃٍ عَمَّاۤ اَرۡضَعَتۡ وَ تَضَعُ کُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمۡلٍ حَمۡلَہَا وَ تَرَی النَّاسَ سُکٰرٰی وَ مَا ہُمۡ بِسُکٰرٰی وَ

2. O People! Fear your Lord. Indeed, the upheaval of the Day of Judgement is a very horrific thing.

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لٰكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللّٰهِ شَدِيْدٌ ﴿٢﴾[3]

This is the picture of the utter self concern that would overtake every person on that day. People will be totally inebriated – not because of drinking – but because of the horrifying nature of the torment.

The verse simultaneously uses singular and plural forms for the addressees. It has been explained at other instances that when the singular is used for plural entities, the purpose is to address each and every entity of a group and it carries more emphasis.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِى اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّ يَتَّبِعُ كُلَّ شَيْطٰنٍ مَّرِيْدٍ ﴿٣﴾[4]

When something is said by using the style "and there are those among people," the purpose is to mention the specific after the general. If the occasion of praise, it is used for praise and if it is of condemnation, as is the case here, then it is used for this purpose. If this style is to be appreciated in the English language, it would imply something to effect: "There are some stupid, foolish and ignorant among people who say such and such things." This specially refers to the group that was always ready to debate and argue with the Prophet (sws) against his message of monotheism. Such people are not many in number in a society. They are just a small faction. Their knowledge is based on hearsay and very limited too. However, they are adept in gossip and singing their own praises. For this reason acting as agents of clever people, they are skilled in leading simpletons astray.

In مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِى اللّٰهِ, the expression فِى اللّٰهِ (about God) is actually فِى تَوْحِيْدِ اللّٰهِ (about the oneness of God) because the disbelievers of Arabia were never rejected God. They only rejected His oneness. The only argument they had to reject this oneness was blind following the religion of their ancestors. In verse 8 ahead, it will be explained that neither they had any knowledge of God's religion nor any guidance of intellect and human nature nor any divine book. They would enter into polemical debates without any of these. It may be kept in mind that professional debaters of such sort have nothing except sharp tongues. Their only source of knowledge is their misguided leaders and all that they can do is brag about it.

In يَتَّبِعُ كُلَّ شَيْطٰنٍ مَّرِيْدٍ, the devils refer to those both among men and jinn. The word كُلَّ (every) points to this inference. Both these "species" of devils have a very deep connection. The devils among the jinn use the devils among men as means to spread mischief. The devils among the jinn inspire them with various thoughts and the devils

3. The day you will see it, every suckling mother will forget her suckled child and every pregnant being will shed her burden and you will see people inebriated even though they will not be inebriated. In fact, the torment of God is a very terrible thing.

4. And there are those among people who without having any knowledge dispute about God's oneness and follow every rebellious wretched devil.

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among men transform this inspiration into a philosophy and give it various names too. Thereafter, they communicate it by various means. The Qur'ān has used the word devil for all such leaders of deception.

The word مَّرِيْدٍ means "mischievous, miscreant and wretched."

These devils, whether they belong to jinn or men always appear in the garb of sincere well-wishers, sympathizers and patriots. In reality, they are very mean scoundrels. They lead astray God's servants to their own ways. Those who succumb to their lures by becoming their followers and spreading the mischief worked by them are led straight into Hell by them.

Monotheism is mentioned right after the Day of Judgement because the latter's importance is related to the former. If partners and intercessors are acknowledged with God, the Day of Judgement becomes insignificant. In the presence of intercessors, how can a day of accountability be feared since they would be able to save people from God's punishment. For this reason, the topics of hereafter and refutation of polytheism are always mentioned adjacent in the Qur'ān so that it becomes evident that none can save people from God's grasp. The matter of everyone will be presented before Him and He alone will pass the verdict.

كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِ اَنَّهٗ مَنْ تَوَلَّاهُ فَاَنَّهٗ يُضِلُّهٗ وَيَهْدِيْهِ اِلٰى عَذَابِ السَّعِيْرِ ۝[5]

It is mentioned at many instances in the Qur'ān that Satan had asked for a time of respite from God until the Day of Judgement in order to lead astray the progeny of Adam. God had granted him this respite after which He will consign him and all his followers to the fire of Hell. The words كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِ point to this fact. In other words, this is a duty assigned by God to Satan. The word فَاَنَّهٗ is coordinated to اَنَّهٗ and مَنْ تَوَلَّاهُ is a conditional clause. The implication is that it is the duty of Satan to lead people astray into Hell. However, this will happen only to those who make him their friend and guardian. Those who regard him to be their enemy and always try to shield themselves from his mischief will not be impacted by his luring. It is like saying that poison is meant to kill; foolish are those who think that it is an antidote and consume it. God has given this respite to Satan to test people and not to make him their leader and receive inspiration from him or to follow him.

Section II: Verses (4-24)

In the coming verses, the subject of monotheism and hereafter discussed earlier is brought up in another way. The phases of creation of human beings, observation of the

5. About whom it has been ordained that whoever befriends him, he will lead him astray and guide him to the torment of Hell.

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sights and signs of this universe and the attributes of God which appear before a sensible person as a result of this observation are presented as arguments in favour of monotheism and hereafter. It is shown that if a person reflects, then these a arguments can be seem within his own self as well as the world around him. He does not need to go far. Foolish are those who deny and dispute such obvious facts. In this regard, those people are also discussed who wanted to worship God on their own conditions. As long as His directives were in accordance with their desires, they were prepared to worship Him. However, they evaded all those directives which were against their desires and interests. In this way, seeing the ever-increasing power of Islam, a group of hypocritical people having two faces had come into being. It wanted to believe in God and Satan, belief and disbelief at the same time. In contrast to open rivals, its attitude was apparently conciliatory; however, in reality, this attitude amounted to polytheism; in fact, worse than it. For this reason, the Qur'ān has also criticized it here: such double standards cannot exist in religion. Let people who think that harm and benefit are not in the hands of God and do not want to obey Him in both good and bad circumstances adopt the attitude they want to. However, they should remember that the greatest of their strategies is not going to avail them without God's consent. At the end, the fate of both rivals – the believers and the proponents of polytheism an disbelief – is mentioned: a day will come when everyone's case will be presented before God and both will be rewarded or punished according to their beliefs and deeds.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِيْ رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ فَاِنَّا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ
مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَّ غَيْرِ مُخَلَّقَةٍ لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ ؕ وَ نُقِرُّ فِي الْاَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَآءُ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ
لِتَبْلُغُوْٓا اَشُدَّكُمْ ۚ وَ مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّتَوَفّٰى وَ مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّرَدُّ اِلٰٓى اَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَ تَرَى
الْاَرْضَ هَامِدَةً فَاِذَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَآءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَ رَبَتْ وَ اَنْۢبَتَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍۭ بَهِيْجٍ ۝۵ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ
الْحَقُّ وَ اَنَّهٗ يُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى وَ اَنَّهٗ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۝۶ وَّ اَنَّ السَّاعَةَ اٰتِيَةٌ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيْهَا ۙ وَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَبْعَثُ مَنْ فِي
الْقُبُوْرِ ۝۷ وَ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِي اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّ لَا هُدًى وَّ لَا كِتٰبٍ مُّنِيْرٍ ۝۸ ثَانِيَ عِطْفِهٖ لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ
سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ لَهٗ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَّ نُذِيْقُهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ عَذَابَ الْحَرِيْقِ ۝۹ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدٰكَ وَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ
لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيْدِ ۝۱۰ وَ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّعْبُدُ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى حَرْفٍ ۚ فَاِنْ اَصَابَهٗ خَيْرُ ِۨاطْمَاَنَّ بِهٖ ۚ وَ اِنْ اَصَابَتْهُ

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فِتْنَةُ ۨ انْقَلَبَ عَلٰى وَجْهِهٖ ۚ خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةَ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿۱۱﴾ يَدْعُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا
يَضُرُّهٗ وَمَا لَا يَنْفَعُهٗ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلٰلُ الْبَعِيْدُ ﴿۱۲﴾ يَدْعُوْا لَمَنْ ضَرُّهٗۤ اَقْرَبُ مِنْ نَّفْعِهٖ ؕ لَبِئْسَ الْمَوْلٰى وَلَبِئْسَ
الْعَشِيْرُ ﴿۱۳﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَفْعَلُ
مَا يُرِيْدُ ﴿۱۴﴾ مَنْ كَانَ يَظُنُّ اَنْ لَّنْ يَّنْصُرَهُ اللّٰهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ بِسَبَبٍ اِلَى السَّمَآءِ ثُمَّ لْيَقْطَعْ
فَلْيَنْظُرْ هَلْ يُذْهِبَنَّ كَيْدُهٗ مَا يَغِيْظُ ﴿۱۵﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ اٰيٰتٍۭ بَيِّنٰتٍ ۙ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَهْدِيْ مَنْ يُّرِيْدُ ﴿۱۶﴾ اِنَّ
الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَالَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا وَالصّٰبِـُٔوْنَ وَالنَّصٰرٰى وَالْمَجُوْسَ وَالَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْۤا ۖ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ
الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدٌ ﴿۱۷﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهٗ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ
وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُوْمُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالدَّوَآبُّ وَكَثِيْرٌ مِّنَ النَّاسِ ؕ وَكَثِيْرٌ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ الْعَذَابُ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّهِنِ اللّٰهُ
فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ مُّكْرِمٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَآءُ ﴿۱۸﴾ هٰذٰنِ خَصْمٰنِ اخْتَصَمُوْا فِيْ رَبِّهِمْ ۫ فَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا قُطِّعَتْ لَهُمْ
ثِيَابٌ مِّنْ نَّارٍ ؕ يُصَبُّ مِنْ فَوْقِ رُءُوْسِهِمُ الْحَمِيْمُ ﴿۱۹﴾ يُصْهَرُ بِهٖ مَا فِيْ بُطُوْنِهِمْ وَالْجُلُوْدُ ﴿۲۰﴾ وَلَهُمْ مَّقَامِعُ مِنْ
حَدِيْدٍ ﴿۲۱﴾ كُلَّمَاۤ اَرَادُوْۤا اَنْ يَّخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَا مِنْ غَمٍّ اُعِيْدُوْا فِيْهَا وَذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيْقِ ﴿۲۲﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُدْخِلُ
الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيْهَا مِنْ اَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَّلُؤْلُؤًا ؕ وَ
لِبَاسُهُمْ فِيْهَا حَرِيْرٌ ﴿۲۳﴾ وَهُدُوْۤا اِلَى الطَّيِّبِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ ۚ وَهُدُوْۤا اِلٰى صِرَاطِ الْحَمِيْدِ ﴿۲۴﴾

O People! If you have doubt on being raised to life again, then reflect that We created you from clay. Then from sperm, then from a clot of blood, then from a lump of flesh: some reach perfection and some remain defective. We have done this so that We fully make evident to you Our power and wisdom. And We lodge in the wombs whatever We want until an appointed time. Then We bring you forth in the form of a child. Then give time so that you may reach your maturity. And some of you die early and some are made to reach extreme of old age so that they even after knowing something, they know nothing. And you see the earth totally dry. Then when We rain down water on it, it becomes lush and grows and sprouts exquisite things of all kinds. All this is because God is the real Lord and He alone gives life to the dead and He has power over all things and the Hereafter is certain to come; there is no doubt about its advent and one day God shall certainly resurrect all those who are in the graves. (5-7)

And are also those among people who dispute about God without any knowledge, without any guidance and without any radiant book, inebriated with arrogance indulge

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in argument to lead people astray from the path of God. For them is humiliation in the world, and on the Day of Judgement, We shall make them taste the torment of the fire: this is in exchange of your deeds which your own hands had sent ahead and God is not the slightest unjust to His servants. (8-10)

And there are also those among people who worship God standing at one edge. If they received any benefit, their hearts strongly adhere to God and if they faced any trial, they turn about their heels. This cost them the world and the Hereafter too. It is this which is an open loss. They call upon other beings besides God which can neither cause harm nor benefit. It is this which is extreme error. They call upon those whose harm is nearer than their benefit. How evil are these masters and how evil are these companions of theirs. Indeed, those who professed faith with full sincerity and did righteous deeds, God shall admit them into orchards beneath which rivers shall be flowing. Indeed, God will do what He intends. (11-14)

He who thinks that God will not help him in this world and in the Hereafter should stretch a rope until the sky and then decide his matter and see if this measure of his is able to alleviate his sorrow? And We have revealed this Qur'ān in this manner in the form of open arguments so that people are guided and indeed God guides whomsoever He wants to. (15-16)

Those who accepted faith, those who adopted Judaism and the Sabaeans, the Nazarenes, the Magians and those who adhered to polytheism, God shall decide among them on the Day of Judgement. Indeed, God knows everything. (17)

Do you not see that what is in the heavens and what is in the earth all prostrate before God alone and the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the beasts and many people as well? And there are many also for whom the torment of God has become mandatory. And they who are humiliated by God cannot then be given respect by anyone. Indeed, God does whatever He intends. (18)

These are two groups that have differed about their Lord. So, those who have disbelieved, for them clothes of fire shall be carved out. Boiling water shall be poured on them from above their heads. Whatever is inside their bellies shall all melt because of it and their skins as well. And to deal with them, there shall be iron hammers. Whenever they would desire to come out of any of its torments, they shall be shoved back into it: "Taste now the flavour of the punishment of burning!" (19-22)

Indeed, God shall however admit those who professed faith and did righteous deeds to orchards below which streams shall be flowing. There they shall be adorned with bracelets of gold and necklaces of pearls. And their clothes there shall entirely be of silk. And they will guided to a pure word of gratitude and they will be guided to the way of the praiseworthy God. (23-24)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِيْ رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ فَاِنَّا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَّغَيْرِ

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مُخَلَّقَةٍ لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ ۚ وَنُقِرُّ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوا أَشُدَّكُمْ ۚ وَمِنكُم مَّن يُتَوَفَّىٰ وَمِنكُم مَّن يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِن بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا ۚ وَتَرَى الْأَرْضَ هَامِدَةً فَإِذَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ وَأَنبَتَتْ مِن كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيجٍ ﴿٥﴾[6]

The Idolaters of Arabia did not outright reject the Day of Judgment: they were doubtful about it and reluctant to accept it. They regarded it to be very improbable. The primary reason of this reluctant behaviour was that they thought it was very unlikely for people to be raised to life again after they die and their bodies are decomposed into mud. It was because of this notion that they did not give any importance to the Day of Judgement. And if they believed in it hypothetically, they trusted their deities and intercessors and thought they would save them from God's accountability. The Qur'ān emphatically discussed the Day of Judgement and stressed that the real life is that of the hereafter; it iterated that this world is a prelude and the next one is its necessary consequence. At the same time, the Qur'ān proved that all their deities and intercessors have no basis. All these things weighed down heavily on them. They thought they were standing on slippery grounds. They reckoned that the only antidote they had to salvage the situation was to harass and corner the Prophet (sws). They took to this by demanding from him to show them the promised doom if it is such a certain event or show them a palpable sign of it in the form of a torment so that no doubt would remain in their minds about it. Keeping this mentality in consideration, the Qur'ān has directed their attention to their own phases of creation and everyday observations of the world. The implication is that they need not go far to find proofs of the oneness of God and the advent of the hereafter; such is the way that God has created human beings and this universe that a person who has a keen eye can always observe God and the Hereafter within him and around him.

The word عَلَقَةٌ means "a clot of blood" and also "a small living insect." This phase comes after the sperm is lodged in the womb when it assumes the shape of blood and a foetus, and shows signs of life.

The word مُّضْغَةٌ refers to "a lump of fresh." This is the stage following the previous one when the foetus assumes the form of a lump of flesh. About this مُّضْغَةٌ, it is said that some of them reach their final form and some are left defective by God, and none

6. O People! If you have doubt on being raised to life again, then reflect that We created you from clay. Then from sperm, then from a clot of blood, then from a lump of flesh: some reach perfection and some remain defective. We have done this so that We fully make evident to you Our power and wisdom. And We lodge in the wombs whatever We want until an appointed time. Then We bring you forth in the form of a child. Then give time so that you may reach your maturity. And some of you die early and some are made to reach extreme of old age so that they even after knowing something, they know nothing. And you see the earth totally dry. Then when We rain down water on it, it becomes lush and grows and sprouts exquisite things of all kinds.

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has the authority to set it right.

The words لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ point to the real purpose for which attention has been directed at these phases of creation. The implication is that God was not dependent on all these phases in order to create human beings. He did not require the elaborate arrangement in which a drop of fluid first lodges itself in the womb of a female species, then assumes the shape of a clot of blood and foetus and then is artistically perfected to become a grand creation. Had God wanted He could have created scores of human beings in their final forms in one go by making them emerge from the mountains and the seas without underaking all this arrangement. But God wanted that a human being's creation should become a means of education for him regarding God's power, wisdom, and providence. It is through it that he is able to have cognizance of his own self and of the grand creator of this universe; his own being bears witness that He Who has created him in such an elaborate manner and shown favour to him has not made him a toy for amusement; on the contrary, there is a profound purpose hidden in his creation which is bound to manifest itself. From every single part of his body he comes to know that his creator has made him from the essence of clay and from the drop of a fluid and for this He was not the slightest bothered. If this is the case, then raising him to life again is very easy for the creator.

The following verses of Sūrah al-Mu'minūn point to precisely the same reality:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلٰلَةٍ مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ﴿١٢﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰهُ نُطْفَةً فِيْ قَرَارٍ مَّكِيْنٍ ﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظٰمًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظٰمَ لَحْمًا ۤ ثُمَّ اَنْشَاْنٰهُ خَلْقًا اٰخَرَ ؕ فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ لَمَيِّتُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ تُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾

And We had created a human being from the essence of clay. Then in the form of a drop of fluid, We placed it in a secure spot. Then made this drop of fluid into the form of a blood clot and made the blood clot into a lump of flesh. Thence created bones in the lump. Thereafter, We covered the bones with flesh. Then We made it into a new creation altogether. Thus, blessed is God, the best of creators. Then after all this you surely have to die. Then you shall be raised to life on the Day of Judgement. (23:12-16)

In these verses of Sūrah al-Mu'minūn, a summary – to which all these phases of creation bear witness – is also presented. However, such is this strange blindness of the philosophers and scientists of current times that do observe all these phases of creation but they are not able to grasp the actual purpose for which God has made all this arrangement.

Consider next the part وَنُقِرُّ فِي الْاَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَآءُ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا (And We lodge in the wombs whatever We want until an appointed time. Then We bring you forth in the

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form of a child). The discourse was still going on when suddenly the words لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ were inserted in it to caution and prod the addressees and awaken them from their foolish slumber. Once this purpose was achieved, the discourse reverted back. The words "whatever We want" show whether the child is a girl or a boy, attractive or ugly, defective or perfect entirely rests on God's will. None else has the authority to choose the gender or appearance of the child. Similarly, the time of pregnancy is also in God's discretion and none has the authority to change its duration.

Consider next the part ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوْٓا اَشُدَّكُمْ. The letter لِ indicates that there is a verb suppressed before it. Several examples of this have passed earlier and a very clear example is coming up in verse 27 of Sūrah al-Mu'min. In other words, God gives time to the newly born child to gradually reach maturity and this pattern is always followed. No one can make an infant reach maturity without the intermediate stages of childhood

Consider next the words وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّرَدُّ اِلٰٓى اَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ. Parallel words to the effect فی صباہ او فی شبابہ are suppressed in the first part. The expression اَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ in the second part points to this suppression. The implication is that many human beings die in chidhood and adolescence and many who reach the exteme of old age. All this too is solely under God's authority. None can alter the life span of a person.

In لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ شَيْـًٔا, the لِ refers to the consequnce. Examples of this usage can be seen earlier. An accurate translation of this would be "so that" or "until." The word عِلْمٍ occurs in the undefined form to connote degradation (*taḥqīr*) or magnifcation (*tafkhīm*). In the first case, the meaning would be that he reaches such old age that whatever little knowledge he had acquired is lost by him. In second case, the meaning would be that after knowing a lot, he forgets everything. I would give preference to the first of these interpretations as parallel verses corroborate it. Thus for example in verse 85 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, it is said: وَ مَآ اُوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا (you have been given little knowledge only). The fact is that a person can become a Socrates or an Hippocrates, but he can only acquire a drop from the ocean of knowledge. He does not have any more capacity in him and this knowledge too deserts him when he reaches a certain age. It is evident from this that no one should show arrogance on his knowledge. It is God-given. He can take it away whenever He intends.

Consider next the last part of the verse: وَ تَرَى الْاَرْضَ هَامِدَةً فَاِذَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَآءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَ رَبَتْ وَ اَنْۢبَتَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍۭ بَهِيْجٍ. After directing attention to the signs of the Day of Judgement found within the stages of creation of human beings, the external world is focused upon. The implication is that when these people persistently see the earth die and being revived, how can they regard being raised to life being something improbable? At every instant, this pattern is rehearsed before them so that they can observe the Day of Judgement even before its advent. The words لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ are understood to be implied here. Since this sign was absolutely evident, repetition was not needed.

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ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَاَنَّهٗ يُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى وَاَنَّهٗ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۙ﴿۶﴾ وَّاَنَّ السَّاعَةَ اٰتِيَةٌ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيْهَا ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَبْعَثُ مَنْ فِي الْقُبُوْرِ ﴿۷﴾[7]

This verse presents a summary of what is stated in the *sūrah* from the beginning up to this point. In other words, it states the purpose of asking people to keep fearing God: He alone is God and all others they worship are mere figments of their imagination. The arguments stated earlier show that God brings back the dead to life and hence whenever He intends, He will bring these Idolaters back to life too. He has power over all things. How can it be difficult for someone to create mankind once again if He can transform a drop of fluid into a cognizant living being and can revive the dry and dead earth to life?

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِي اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّلَا هُدًى وَّلَا كِتٰبٍ مُّنِيْرٍ ﴿۸﴾[8]

This is an explanation of the attitude of disputation and argumentation referred to in verse 3. It has been explained there that the real enmity of the Idolaters with God was regarding His oneness. As far as God was concerned, they acknowledged Him without any dispute. However, at the same time, they had associated many partners with Him. The onus of proof of their existence was on them but they never had any. The only thing that they could say was that they were following their forefathers and would not tolerate any humiliation of them. Obviously, when a debate hinges merely upon blind following of ancestors, it amounts to arrogance and haughtiness. Once a person is inflicted with it, no logic can influence him. For this reason, the Qur'ān calls it an argument without "argument" in the following verses:

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُجَادِلُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطٰنٍ اَتٰىهُمْ ۙ اِنْ فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ اِلَّا كِبْرٌ مَّا هُمْ بِبَالِغِيْهِ (۴۰: ۵۶)

Indeed those who indulge in arguments about the signs of God without any reasoning that has come to them, arrogance is entrenched in their hearts in which they will never succeed. (40:56)

In the following verses, it is pointed out that motive behind this disputation and argumentation

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِي اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّلَا هُدًى وَّلَا كِتٰبٍ مُّنِيْرٍ ﴿۲۰﴾ وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوْا مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ قَالُوْا بَلْ

7. All this is because God is the real Lord and He alone gives life to the dead and He has power over all things and the Hereafter is certain to come; there is no doubt about its advent and one day God shall certainly resurrect all those who are in the graves.

8. And are also those among people who dispute about God without any knowledge, without any guidance and without any radiant book.

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نَتَّبِعُ مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ اٰبَآءَنَا ؕ اَوَلَوْ كَانَ الشَّيْطٰنُ يَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلٰى عَذَابِ السَّعِيْرِ ﴿٢١﴾

And there are still those among people who dispute about God, without knowledge or reasoning or any illuminating scripture. And when they are invited: "Follow what God has revealed," they reply: "We will only follow the ways of our forefathers." (31:20-21)

ثَانِيَ عِطْفِهٖ لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ لَهٗ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَّنُذِيْقُهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ عَذَابَ الْحَرِيْقِ ﴿٩﴾[9]

The words ثَانِيَ عِطْفِهٖ portray their arrogance. When a person turns away in arrogance, he shakes his shoulders while turning away. If a person does not have any reasoning for his stance and is also not willing to give up his stance, his haughtiness is dented a great deal. He avenges this by a show of arrogance.

All this pride is not meant to support some truth but only to lead people astray just like themselves have gone astray. It may be kept in mind that with an awareness of one's weaknesses, a person should not lose hope if he has done astray. There is great chance that he will return to the truth. However, if a person arrogantly wants to impose his baseless ideas on others, nothing good can be expected from him.

Consider now the last part of the verse. The humiliation they will face in this world will be because they showed conceit against the truth. It may be kept in mind that the addressees of the messenger are under discussion. As has been repeatedly pointed out, in their case the established practice of God is that if these people become adamant on opposing the truth after its conclusive communication, they are subjugated and humiliated in this world and in Hereafter they will be consigned to Hell.

There exists a similarity in the deed and its punishment in the expression عَذَابَ الْحَرِيْقِ (torment of the fire). In other words since in this world they burned and seethed in anger, hate and jealousy, they will face the torment of buring in the hereafter.

ذٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدٰكَ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيْدِ ﴿١٠﴾[10]

This style of the Qur'ān has been explained at various instances that when the purpose is to portray the situation, words like قِيْلَ (was said to them) and يُقَالُ (would be said to them) are generally suppressed. Here too, same is the case. In other words, the situation itself will bear witness that what they see is the result of the seeds they had sown; God is not the slightest unjust to them.

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9. Inebriated with arrogance indulge in argument to lead people astray from the path of God. For them is humiliation in the world, and on the Day of Judgement, We shall make them taste the torment of the fire.

10. This is in exchange of your deeds which your own hands had sent ahead and God is not the slightest unjust to His servants.

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The word ظَلَّامٍ occurs in its exaggerated form. It has been explained at various instances that when such forms are preceded by a negative imperative verb, the purpose is to exaggerate the negative sense. Thus an accurate translation of وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيْدِ would be: God is not the slightest unjust to His servants.

The implication of the verse is that a person will reap in the hereafter what he sows in this world. If he has shown, in fact, nurtured anger and hate against the truth, then the consequence is the fire of Hell. God will make him encounter the results of whatever he has done and not the slightest injustice will be faced by him.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّعْبُدُ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى حَرْفٍ ۚ فَاِنْ اَصَابَهٗ خَيْرُ ِۨاطْمَاَنَّ بِهٖ ۚ وَاِنْ اَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةُ ِۨانْقَلَبَ عَلٰى وَجْهِهٖ ۚ خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةَ ۭ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿١١﴾[11]

After mentioning the Idolaters who were prepared to argue and debate in favour of polytheism, those people are referred to who wanted to simultaneously have ties with God and Satan and with truth and falsehood. They neither wanted to be devotedy part of the Muslims nor the Idolaters. They wanted to stand clear of both and watch their own interest. When they would see benefit in siding with the Muslims, they would do so and when they would see benefit in aligning themselves with the Idolaters, they would become their companions. After witnessing the ever-increasing might of Islam, such two-faced people had also arisen among both the Idolaters and the People of the Book. They wanted to strike a compromise between belief and disbelief. They would contend that God should also be worshipped and so should the idols and deities their forefathers had been worshipping. They reckoned that why should these beings be forsaken when they are of benefit to them. It was this group which had given the suggestion of altering the Qur'ān, as has been mentioned in Sūrah Yūnus. If such elements entered the folds of Islam, they were never fully dedicated to the belief of monotheism. As long as it served their interest, they would align themselves with Islam and when they would be faced by a calamity, they would stumble and lose hope in God and regard others to be their protectors and guardians. This attitude in its essence is polytheism. Earlier the nature of polytheism of those who would debate and argue in its favour is referred to. If there is a difference between the two, it is only of the tone. These debate-mongers were very agressive in their enmity and the ones under discussion were hypocritical in their attitude. There was no other difference between them. The requisites of monotheism are only fulfilled when a person consigns himself entirely to his Lord. If as a result, his Lord provides him with a bed of roses, he remains happy and if his Lord ordains horrible death for him, he still

11. And there are also those among people who worship God standing at one edge. If they received any benefit, their hearts strongly adhere to God and if they faced any trial, they turn about their heels. This cost them the world and the Hereafter too. It is this which is an open loss.

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remains happy. If someone wants to worship God as long as it serves his interest, then he is a polytheist and not a monotheist. God has no place for such opportunists.

The style in وَ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّعْبُدُ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى حَرْفٍ (and there are also those among people who worship God standing at one edge) is that of disgust and hate. The word "worship" here refers both to servitude and obedience to the Almighty. The expression "at one edge" means from afar. In other words, they do not worship God by being fully submissive to Him, as is required by ادْخُلُوْا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً (fully enter the folds of Islam (2:208)); they vacillate from one side to another مُّذَبْذَبِيْنَ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ لَآ اِلٰى هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَ لَآ اِلٰى هٰٓؤُلَآءِ (wavering in between; neither here nor there (4:176)). Neither are they sincere to the Muslims nor to the disbelievers.

Consider next the portion: فَاِنْ اَصَابَهٗ خَيْرُ ِۨاطْمَاَنَّ بِهٖ ۚ وَاِنْ اَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةُ ِۨانْقَلَبَ عَلٰى وَجْهِهٖ. The word فِتْنَةٌ here means trial or calamity. This portion is actually an explanation of the words "at an edge." As long as things are according to their liking, they are happy with God but when they face some trial, they take to their heels and start knocking at the doors of others. They desire flowers without being prepared to bear the pain of the thorns. The fact is that the way that leads to God has trials too besides comforts. Unless a person succeeds in these trials, he cannot please God.

The words خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَ الْاٰخِرَةَ ؕ refer to the fact that so foolish are these people that they ruin both their herin and the hereafter. If a person is faced with a trial in this world and he is inflicted with some loss in his person or wealth, then concealed in this loss is a great benefit for him in the hereafter. The condition is that he must be content with the decision of his Lord and totally submit to Him. All such trials strengthen his faith and multiply his reward manifold in the hereafter. However, if some foolish person gets so worried because of such trials that he loses hope in God and starts having evil estimations about Him, then he is set to be ruined in this world as well as in the next. Thus the words ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِيْنُ aptly say that this precisely is open loss. Any wordly loss of a person is actually not a loss since he has reserved his reward with God in leiu of it. However, a person who has incurred worldly loss as well next-wordly loss, then this obviously is the ultimate loss.

Deliberation on the character of the people dicussed in this verse shows that even today people are not much different. Today Muslims who were made responsible to obliterate polytheism want to fulfil the obligation of worshipping God in a very superficial way from afar. On the one hand, they regard the Qur'ān to be the Book of God and on other follow others in their political, social, cultural, legal affairs. The only utility the Qur'ān now has is that it be recited at the death of a person by students of seminaries to earn salvation for the deceased even though he may not have incidentally even touched the Qur'ān. For them, the Qur'ān is not a Book for the living; it is a Book for the dead. It is not meant to receive guidance but only meant for occasional reverence. In spite of having the Book of God among them, strange is their attitude of following the ways of others.

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يَدْعُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهٗ وَمَا لَا يَنْفَعُهٗ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلٰلُ الْبَعِيْدُ ﴿۱۲﴾[12]

The word يَدْعُوْا here encompasses all such meanings as "to pray, to plead, to beseech and to ask for help and mercy." If someone is invoked thinking that he has the authority to cause harm or benefit, then this is polytheism. Only God has this authority. If a person receives harm or benefit from someone, it is because of God's permission. For this reason, a person should trust God in all circumstances. He should never seek other's help while losing hope in God. At the end of this *sūrah*, the nature of regarding others to have the authority to give benefit or harm is explained through a parable thus:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٌ فَاسْتَمِعُوْا لَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ لَنْ يَّخْلُقُوْا ذُبَابًا وَّلَوِ اجْتَمَعُوْا لَهٗ ؕ وَاِنْ يَّسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْـًٔا لَّا يَسْتَنْقِذُوْهُ مِنْهُ ؕ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوْبُ (۲۲:۷۳)

People, an example is cited: So, listen to it attentively. Those who you invoke besides God cannot even create a fly in spite of all of them trying to. And if a fly snatches something from them, they cannot even protect it. Those who desire and that what they desire are both frail. (22:73)

The implication of the words ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلٰلُ الْبَعِيْدُ (it is this which is extreme error) is that while leaving God if these people had taken refuge with someone who could cause harm and benefit, it would still have been a form of error but could not be termed as extreme error. However, fleeing from God and seeking refuge with those who cannot even scare away a fly from their faces is not just error; it is extreme error. They ran away from the blaze of God's trial and ended up in Hell.

يَدْعُوْا لَمَنْ ضَرُّهٗۤ اَقْرَبُ مِنْ نَّفْعِهٖ ؕ لَبِئْسَ الْمَوْلٰى وَلَبِئْسَ الْعَشِيْرُ ﴿۱۳﴾[13]

I find very convincing the opinion of those grammarians who say that the يَدْعُوْا of this verse is actually a repetition of the يَدْعُوْا previous verse and does not have any link to the sentence after it. The repetition of the verb is only for the purpose of expresssing sorrow and yearning. Thus لَمَنْ ضَرُّهٗۤ is grammatically not the object of يَدْعُوْا. It is in fact a supplement to the object mentioned in the previous verse, and the purpose is to explain "extreme error." The implication is that the deities these people

12. They call upon other beings besides God which can neither cause harm nor benefit. It is this which is extreme error.

13. They call upon those whose harm is nearer than their benefit. How evil are these masters and how evil are these companions of theirs.

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invoke are not only unable to cause harm or benefit, their harm is much more then their benefit. If the refuge of those deities is sought which can neither cause harm not benefit, then this certainly is foolishness. But it is compounded foolishness if refuge is sought with those deities whose harm is immediate and proven and whose benefit is absolutely doubtful. Those who have severed their ties from God and regarded others to be their guardian and protector have actually deprived themselves of their real support. Whether other alleged supports can of use of not, is something to be seen later and they will come to know of it.

The sentence لَبِئْسَ الْمَوْلٰى وَ لَبِئْسَ الْعَشِيْرُ is very similar to the expression ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوْبُ of verse 73 cited earlier in verse. Just as it is said there that the seeker and the sought after are helpless and weak, it is said here that very evil are the deities which were regarded to be the their guardians besides God as well as the Idolaters who made them ther guardians. If the master and the disciple, the leader and the lead, the imam and the follower are of the same mould and outdo one another in their evil ways, then the result is not difficult to guess.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيْدُ ﴿۱۴﴾[14]

After mentioning the fate of those who, while losing hope in God, seek refuge with others, the fate of those is referred to here who in comfort and discomfort, conducive and adverse circumtances will adhere to faith and do righteous deeds. The verb اٰمَنُوْا here is used in its complete and ultimate meaning because it occurs in contrast to وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّعْبُدُ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى حَرْفٍ (and there are also those among people who worship God standing at one edge). Hence, it would necessarily mean those who diligently adhered to worshipping God with full devotion and were never hypocritical in their attitude.

The last part of the verse اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيْدُ is a strong remark on the behaviour of these Idolaters: they are depending on the support of the deities which can neither cause harm nor benefit and are not even able to take back a thing snatched from them by a fly. On the other hand, God has power over everything and can do whatever He intends. This expression actually sounds assurance as well as glad tidings: they should not get bogged down by the adverse circumstances they are facing; howevermuch these circumstances be hard and harsh, they should trust their Lord and rest assured that He can do everthing.

مَنْ كَانَ يَظُنُّ اَنْ لَّنْ يَّنْصُرَهُ اللّٰهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ بِسَبَبٍ اِلَى السَّمَآءِ ثُمَّ لْيَقْطَعْ فَلْيَنْظُرْ هَلْ يُذْهِبَنَّ كَيْدُهٗ مَا

14. Indeed, those who professed faith with full sincerity and did righteous deeds, God shall admit them into orchards beneath which rivers shall be flowing. Indeed, God will do what He intends.

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يَغِيْظُ ﴿١٥﴾[15]

The antecedent of the pronoun in يَّنْصُرَهُ is مَنْ. The opinion of those who regard it to be Muḥammad (sws) is against the context. The verse is referring to the same hypocrites who are mentioned in the previous verses. About them it had been stated that if they face a trial, they lose hope in God and regard others to be their guardians and protectors and think that God will not or is unable to alleviate their sufferings.

The words فَلْيَمْدُدْ بِسَبَبٍ اِلَى السَّمَآءِ ie stretch a rope in the sky is a metaphor that means to execute the last and ultimate measure. This metaphor also occurs in Sūrah al-An‘ām in the following words:

وَاِنْ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكَ اِعْرَاضُهُمْ فَاِنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ اَنْ تَبْتَغِيَ نَفَقًا فِي الْاَرْضِ اَوْ سُلَّمًا فِي السَّمَآءِ فَتَاْتِيَهُمْ بِاٰيَةٍ ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَجَمَعَهُمْ عَلَى الْهُدٰى فَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ (٦: ٣٥)

If you find their aversion hard to bear, find if you can a trench in the earth or a stairway in the sky by which you may bring them a sign. Had God willed, He could have gathered all of them on guidance; so, do not become of those who are overcome by emotions. (6:35)

Classical poets like Zuhayr (d. 609 AD) and A‘shā (d. 625 AD) too have used this idiom for the final effort.

Zuhayr says:[16]

وإن يرق أسباب السماء بسلم

A‘shā says:[17]

ورقيت أسباب السماء بسلم

Consider next the expresssion: ثُمَّ لْيَقْطَعْ

According to Abū Muslim the word قطع means “to travel a distance.” In other words, the implication is that he should stretch a rope in the sky and climb to it. Some people say that it means “cause divine revelation to cease.” In other words, they mean that those who think that God will not help His messenger should climb in the sky and stop the coming of divine revelation. Many people have interpreted it to mean “to

15. He who thinks that God will not help him in this world and in the Hereafter should stretch a rope until the sky and then decide his matter and see if this measure of his is able to alleviate his sorrow?

16. Zuhayr ibn Abī Salamah, *Dīwān*, 6.

17. A‘shā, *Dīwān*, 206.

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hand someone to death" or "to suffocate someone to death" ie., he should suspend a rope from the sky and hang humself. Regardless of the impropriety of these interpretations, the meaning ascribed to the word قطع in them is itself dubious. It is totally inappropriate to regard the expression to mean ceasing of divine revelation or to hang to death. Linguistic taste abhors this. In the presence of customary and common words to convey a meaning, it is entirely against the eloquence of the Qur'ān to use an inappropriate word. Though the meaning "to travel a distance" cannot be regarded as inappropriate because expressions like قطع وادی are used in Arabic. However, here the use of this word for this meaning is totally inapt. This is because since the verse mentions stretching a rope towards the sky, words to the affect فَلْيَتَصَعَّدْ (he should climb) would have been suitable and not يقطع.

In my opinion, all these interpretations do not hold water. However, in classical Arabic, this word is conventionally used to decide a matter with determination. An example of this usage is found in the Qur'ān itself. In verse 32 of Sūrah al-Naml, it is stated: قَالَتْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمَلَؤُا اَفْتُوْنِيْ فِيْٓ اَمْرِيْ ۚ مَا كُنْتُ قَاطِعَةً اَمْرًا حَتّٰى تَشْهَدُوْنِ.[18]

After this explanation of the components of the verse, let us reflect on its meaning. It implies that every wretch who loses hope in God and makes evil estimations about Him will not be helped by Him. While adopting this attitude if he makes others his guardians and protectors, he can do whatever he wants – even reach the heavens and expend all his power to decide his matter and alleviate his sorrow if he can. In other words, God has no concern with such miscreants. They can wander away anywhere they want to and quench their thirst from any pond they may like. They should, however, remember that the thirst found in human nature cannot be quenched by every fountain; it can only be quenched by the fountain of faith. The vacuum found in it cannot be filled by all sorts of things; only the remembrance of the one God can fill this vacuum. Readers may take a look of what I have written while explaining verse 124 of Sūrah Ṭāhā. It will also answer some more questions that may arise regarding the verse under discussion. It may be kept in mind that losing hoping in God is a very prominent factor that leads to polytheism. I have explained this in my book *Essence of Polytheism*. When a person severs himself from God, he is nonetheless forced by his nature to find some other support. However, since the real support is only and only God, even if he climbs into the sky, all his efforts end up in vain.

The word وَالْاٰخِرَةِ of the verse is also worthy of attention. The implication is that just as in this world only God is the only help and support, in the next world too He is the only help and support. If a person has wrong estimations about God's justice and regards somoene else to be his support that will avail him against God, he may do so. This false notion of his will fizzle away on the Day of Judgement.

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18. The queen of Sheba said: "Courtiers! Give your opinion in this matter of mine. I do not take a final decision in a matter unless you people are present to give advice."

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وَكَذٰلِكَ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ اٰيٰتٍۢ بَيِّنٰتٍ ۙ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَهْدِيْ مَنْ يُّرِيْدُ ﴿١٦﴾[19]

This verse serves as a warning and the word كَذٰلِكَ points to the clear arguments in favour of monotheism and refutation of polytheism mentioned earlier. Concomitant indications show that after the first part of the verse "and We have revealed this Qur'ān in this manner in the form of open arguments," words to the effect "those who have the urge in them will profess faith in these revelations and those deprived of it will continue to indulge in frivolous argumentation," are suppressed as is indicated in verse 8 earlier.

The last part of the verse refers to the established practice of God regarding providing guidance which has been repeatedly explained in this exegesis: only they receive God's guidance who use their insight and intellect; as for those who become deaf and blind in this regard, their hearts are sealed.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَالَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا وَالصّٰبِـِٕيْنَ وَالنَّصٰرٰى وَالْمَجُوْسَ وَالَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْٓا ۖ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدٌ ﴿١٧﴾[20]

All groups mentioned in this verse except the Magians and the Idolaters are mentioned in verse 62 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Readers may look up what I have written there, as a detailed explanation has been given there for the Jews, Christians and the Sabaeans.[21] The Magians were originally the followers of Zoroastrianism and this religion was based on pure monothesim, as I have explained in Sūrah al-Kahf. However, just as with the passage of time, the shape of every relion changed, its followers too distorted it and ended up worshipping fire and being inflicted with other polytheistic innovations.

This verse also relate to the earlier verses in which the debate and argumentation between the believers and the idolaters is mentioned. The real rivals of this debate were these two denominations but as has been referred to earlier other religious factions too were present in Arabia. So they also took sides in this debate. Since, the message of Islam was against their beliefs, all their sympathies were with the Idolaters. In particular, the Jews and Nazarenes were openly supporting them at every front. The Qur'ān has called each by its name in this verse and informed them that the hostility they are showing against God and His revleations is not going to end here. This dispute will be presented before God on the Day of Judgement. On the one hand will be the believers and on the other will be the Idolaters and their allies: the Jews,

19. And We have revealed this Qur'ān in this manner in the form of open arguments so that people are guided and indeed God guides whomsoever He wants to.

20. Those who accepted faith, those who adopted Judaism and the Sabaeans, the Nazarenes, the Magians and those who adhered to polytheism, God shall decide among them on the Day of Judgement. Indeed, God knows everything.

21. See: *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 182-187.

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the Sabaeans, the Nazarenes and the Magians. On that day, God will decide the proponents of belief and disbelief. Here "decision" actually refers to its consequence: the results of every person's efforts he is undertaking here will come before him. The believers will be rewarded for their sacrifices and the idolaters and the disbelievers and their allies will face the results of their misdeeds.

The last part of the verse is meant to assure the believers and warn and admonish the idolaters and their supporters. God is watching everything. He is observing the sacrifices and feats of valour of the believers and also seeing the pranks and conspiracies of their rivals. Hence, He will deal with everyone according to what they are worthy of.

It can be seen that in this verse the believers are mentioned the foremost, the idolaters at the end and in between other sects are referred to. Its reason, as referred to earlier, is that these were the two factions which held the primary status in the ongoing debate and discussion. The rest of them were secondary. Thus in verse 19 ahead, it is specified that the real factions are these two: the believers on the one hand and the disbelievers and idolaters on the other. He who is not with the believers is with the disbelievers whatever name he adopts and whichever religion he claims to follow.

The style adopted in the verse in citing various groups is also noteworthy. The Muslims, the Jews and the Idolaters are mentioned in the form of verbs while the Sabaeans, the Nazarenes and the Magians are mentioned in the form of nouns. The reason for this is that practically the contesting forces there were the Muslims on one side and the Idolaters and Jews on the other. The Jews because of their jealousy and malice were very active in supporting the Idolaters and opposing the Muslims. As for the rest of the sects, though their sympathies were with the Idolaters, they were not very active. For this reason, the real factions in the contest are mentioned in the form of verbs and the others in the form of nouns. Those who have a literary taste know that there is a certain amount of stir and commotion found in verbs whereas nouns only serve to be signs of distinction.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَسۡجُدُ لَهٗ مَنۡ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنۡ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَالشَّمۡسُ وَالۡقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُوۡمُ وَالۡجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالدَّوَآبُّ وَكَثِيۡرٌ مِّنَ النَّاسِ ؕ وَكَثِيۡرٌ حَقَّ عَلَيۡهِ الۡعَذَابُ ؕ وَمَنۡ يُّهِنِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنۡ مُّكۡرِمٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَفۡعَلُ مَا يَشَآءُ ﴿۱۸﴾ 22

Cited here is that argument in favour of monotheism which is testified to by every object of this universe by its very existence. We have been referring to this fact in this exegesis that every object of this universe in its instinctive nature has an Abrahamic temperament. The sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the cattle are all following the directives of God. None of them deviates the slightest from laws prescribed for it

22. Do you not see that what is in the heavens and what is in the earth all prostrate before God alone and the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the beasts and many people as well? And there are many also for whom the torment of God has become mandatory. And they who are humiliated by God cannot then be given respect by anyone. Indeed, God does whatever He intends.

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by God. The sun, which has been regarded to be a deity and worshipped the most, bears witness from its very existence that day and night it stands, kneels and prostrates before its Lord. At the time of sunrise, it raises its head and remains standing until afternoon; after midday it kneels and at the time of sunset it prostrates before God and remains in this situation throughout the night. This fact is attested to by the moon through its waxing and waning and the stars too at their appearance and disappearance. Same is the case with the mountains, trees and the beasts. The shadow of each of these is always in a state of standing, kneeling and prostration. Deliberation shows that the nature of this shadow is so Abrahamic that it always remains in the opposite side to the sun. If the sun is in the east, the shadow spreads towards the west and vice versa. In other wods, the shadow of everything by its very existence teaches us that it is not the sun which is worthy of prostration but in fact its creator.

This argument in favour of monotheism is in the form of an insinuation and hence cannot be grasped by logic. Yet those who reflect on the system of this universe greatly value such insinuations.

In Sūrah Ra'd, this argument is stated thus:

وَلِلّٰهِ يَسْجُدُ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَّكَرْهًا وَّظِلٰلُهُمْ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْاٰصَالِ (١٣: ١٥)

And whatever is in the heavens and the earth all are prostrating before God willingly or unwillingly and also their shadows morning and evening. (13:15)

Readers may look up its explanation. The words "their shadows morning and evening" of this verse refer to the fact that if some wretch rebels against prostrating before God in his circle of authority, his own shadows by its very existence detests this attitude. For the shadow persists in its Abrahamic nature and in no way is willing to bear the shame of bowing down to someone other than God.

In Sūrah al-Naḥl, this argument is cited in the following words:

اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اِلٰى مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ يَّتَفَيَّؤُا ظِلٰلُهٗ عَنِ الْيَمِيْنِ وَالشَّمَآئِلِ سُجَّدًا لِّلّٰهِ وَهُمْ دٰخِرُوْنَ وَلِلّٰهِ يَسْجُدُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ وَّالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ (١٦: ٤٨-٤٩)

Have these people not reflected see that whatever God has created, their shadows prostrate before God turning from the right and from the left and [the objects which have these shadows] are meek and submissive? And all living beings in the heavens and the earth prostrate to God only and the angels of God too, they are never arrogant. (16:48-49)

The words وَكَثِيْرٌ مِّنَ النَّاسِ ؕ وَكَثِيْرٌ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ الْعَذَابُ imply that same is the case of many servants of God who have an upright nature. Just as all objects of this universe that do not have an intention submit to God's directives and prostrate before Him alone, there

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are many people who out of their free will and intention submit to His directives and do not prostrate before anyone but Him. However, there are many who have misused this freedom. Thereby they have made the greatest honour that God has bestowed on them – freedom of intent – a means of their own disgrace by going away from the truth. Even though every object of this universe has been made by God to serve human beings, it is not ready to tolerate the humiliation of prostrating before them. However, such are human beings that even though they are best of God's creatures and His vicegerents on earth, they worship deities which are much below their status.

These words of the verse say that it is these people for whom God's torment has been ordained because they disgraced themselves and also tried to belittle their Lord.

The last part of the verse وَمَنْ يُّهِنِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ مُّكْرِمٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ refers to the fact that the status granted to human beings by God is dependent on their character and conduct. If they conform to moral standards, their rank and status are kept intact by God and even increased. On the other hand, if they do not do so, they are let to fall in the pit they themselves want to fall into. Verse 115 of Sūrah al-Nisā': نُوَلِّهٖ مَا تَوَلّٰى (We shall direct him in the direction he has chosen) and other similar ones allude to this established practice of God. None can save those for whom this practice has been ordained. These words also sound assurance to the Prophet (sws) that he may try as hard as he can but he cannot save them from the humiliation they have chosen for themselves. After conclusive communication of the truth, this disgraceful fate has become their destiny from God.

One aspect that becomes evident from this verse is that the real distinction of a human being is to acknowledge monotheism. If he deprives himself of this distinction, he becomes lowly from the lowliest things of this universe. The second aspect that becomes evident is that human beings remain in harmony with this universe as long as they do not prostrate before others besides God. If they accept this humiliation, they become misfits and detach themselves from the temperament of this universe. So much so, their own shadow is in discord with them. Then there exists such a conflict between them and their shadows.

هٰذٰنِ خَصْمٰنِ اخْتَصَمُوْا فِيْ رَبِّهِمْ ۫ فَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا قُطِّعَتْ لَهُمْ ثِيَابٌ مِّنْ نَّارٍ ؕ يُصَبُّ مِنْ فَوْقِ رُءُوْسِهِمُ الْحَمِيْمُ ﴿۱۹﴾ يُصْهَرُ بِهٖ مَا فِيْ بُطُوْنِهِمْ وَالْجُلُوْدُ ﴿۲۰﴾ وَلَهُمْ مَّقَامِعُ مِنْ حَدِيْدٍ ﴿۲۱﴾ كُلَّمَآ اَرَادُوْٓا اَنْ يَّخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَا مِنْ غَمٍّ اُعِيْدُوْا فِيْهَا وَذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيْقِ ﴿۲۲﴾[23]

Now these verses mentions the fate of the two rivals referred to earlier in verse 17.

23. These are two groups that have differed about their Lord. So, those who have disbelieved, for them clothes of fire shall be carved out. Boiling water shall be poured on them from above their heads. Whatever is inside their bellies shall all melt because of it and their skins as well. And to deal with them, there shall be iron hammers. Whenever they would desire to come out of any of its torments, they shall be shoved back into it: "Taste now the flavour of the punishment of burning!"

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There it was said that a day will come when God will decide between them; however, the details of their fate were not mentioned. In these verses, these details are mentioned.

In verse 17, many groups had been mentioned while here only two are alluded to. Thus the question arises that if this verse is referring to those groups, then why only two are referred to. It seems that in the light of classical Arabic literature, my mentor Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī is of the opinion that if the groups are two or more than two they can be referred to in the dual as well as in the plural. The plural اخْتَصَمُوْا also corroborate his opinion. However, I am inclined to believe that in spite of the fact that many groups are mentioned, in reality only two groups existed. If the opposition and enmity towards monotheism and Islam are taken into consideration, the Jews, the Nazarenes, the Idolaters, the Sabaeans and the Magians were one. True that the nature of their opposition was different, but all of them were united against Islam. Thus the Qur'ān on the principle that "all disbelievers are one" regarded them to be one faction and regarded Muslims to be the other faction. In this capacity, their fates are stated.

The words "have differed about their Lord" refer to the dispute and argumentation that was going on between these two factions regarding monotheism and polytheism and has been referred to earlier in verses 3 and 8. It may be kept in mind that in this conflict between monotheism and polytheism, the People of the Book in spite of being the People of the Book openly aligned themselves with the Idolaters.

The words "those who have disbelieved" refer to all factions who in this conflict sided with polytheism. It has been explained at several instances that the reason polytheism is called disbelief is that in its essence polytheism is disbelief. The view of those who regard polytheism to be a lesser evil than disbelief is against the Qur'ān.

Consider next the words "for them clothes of fire shall be carved out." Since in this world these people in their enmity against the truth seethed and burnt in the fire of hate, anger and jealousy, an attire from fire will be carved out from them in the next world. Boiling water will be poured on their heads that will melt all their internal organs and their external skins.

Consider next the words "And to deal with them, there shall be iron hammers; whenever they would desire to come out of any of its torments, they shall be shoved back into it." It is apparent from the words "from any of its torments" that there will be no chance for them to escape from any of the torments of Hell. At best they would try to find refuge in some other torment but that too would not be possible.

The words "Taste now the flavour of the punishment of burning" portray the situation. In other words, the prevailing circumstances themselves will make them know that there is place to escape. It has been referred to various instances that there is no need to suppose the suppression of words like قیل (it will be said to them) on such occasions. What is portrayed by the situation is more potent than what is portrayed by the tongue.

Here in accordance with linguistic principles of Arabic, a co-ordinated clause is

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suppressed. Thus the discourse would be: اِخْسَؤُا فِيْهَا وَذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيْقِ. Examples of such a suppression can be seen in the earlier *sūrahs*.

Here readers may note the similarity between deed and its fate. People for whom the Prophet (sws) and his companions expended all their efforts to save them from destruction not only refused this favour, they became their enemies merely because they had tried to save them from this destruction. So now when they face this very destruction in the hereafter, what is making them run away from it? They should now taste what they dearly loved in the previous world.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيْهَا مِنْ اَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَّلُؤْلُؤًا ۭ وَلِبَاسُهُمْ فِيْهَا حَرِيْرٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَهُدُوْٓا اِلَى الطَّيِّبِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ ۚ وَهُدُوْٓا اِلٰى صِرَاطِ الْحَمِيْدِ ﴿٢٤﴾[24]

After mentioning the fate of the adversaries of Islam, now the fate of those people is referred to who strongly adhered to the truth in the wake of grave opposition.

In يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيْهَا مِنْ اَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَّلُؤْلُؤًا the word لُؤْلُؤًا is coordinated to grammatical placement of اَسَاوِرَ. The implication is that in Paradise they will be made to wear bracelets of gold and necklaces of pearl. It is evident from the words "and their clothes there shall entirely be of silk" that in Paradise everything related to their attire will be of silk. They will wear it, sleep on it and even their quilts and all other related material will be of silk.

The words "and they will guided to a pure word of gratitude" refer to the continuous chants of the believers. They will express their gratitude when they would see that all the promises of their Lord had been fulfilled. In verse 74 of Sūrah al-Zumar, the words used are: وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ صَدَقَنَا وَعْدَهٗ.[25] Similarly, in verses 34-35 of Sūrah al-Fāṭir, it is said: وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْٓ اَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزَنَ ۭ اِنَّ رَبَّنَا لَغَفُوْرٌ شَكُوْرُۨ الَّذِيْٓ اَحَلَّنَا دَارَ الْمُقَامَةِ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ.[26]

The words "and they will be guided to the way of the praiseworthy God" in my opinion refer to the "place of residence" mentioned in the above quoted verses of Sūrah al-Fāṭir. The word "guidance" here refers to guidance to one's destination and the passive voice in it is meant to express honour for them. The implication is: through a group of angels these people will be guided to the way that will lead them to their place of residence that God has chosen for them.

Here it may be kept in mind that the circumstances and environment of the Paradise

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24. Indeed, God shall however admit those who professed faith and did righteous deeds to orchards below which streams shall be flowing. There they shall be adorned with bracelets of gold and necklaces of pearls. And their clothes there shall entirely be of silk. And they will guided to a pure word of gratitude and they will be guided to the way of the praiseworthy God.

25. And they will say: "Gratitude be to God who has fulfilled His promises made with us."

26. And they will say: "Gratitude be to God Who has taken away grief from us. Indeed, our Lord is Forgiving and One Who accepts; Who through His grace has admitted us to this place of residence."

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and Hell relate to an unseen world. In order to make them comprehensible, there is no option but to use words with which the addressees are accustomed to. The Arabs were deeply influenced by the culture of the Egyptians and the Persians. Thus to portray luxury and comfort, the style adopted by the Qur'ān reflects the notion of luxury of the Arabs or the one they were generally influenced with. These notions and concepts change with the change of times. For this reason, instead of words, their essence should always be kept in mind. Thus it should be accepted that the people of Paradise will receive the favours mentioned in the Qur'ān. As far as their actual reality is concerned, only God knows it. The words and phrases adopted are meant to merely convey what is best comprehensible to the addressees.

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Section III: Verses (25-37)

The debate of monotheism and polytheism reaches its climax in this section. The reason that the Quraysh and their allies had taken to severe animosity was that they fully understood that the conflict between monotheism and polytheism was not merely ideological. It would have an impact on their political and religious leadership that had because of being the custodians of the House of God. They had forcibly continued in this capacity because they claimed that it was they who were the real inheritors of Abraham's legacy. The tribe of the Banū Hāshim also had the honour to be in possession of the keys of the of House of God. In those times, Abū Lahab was their leader. He had forcibly taken possession of the public treasury of Makkah and had full freedom to use it at will. It may be kept in mind that the Quraysh did not merely hold the reins of leadership in Makkah; since they were the custodians of the House of God, the whole of Arabia accepted their religious leadership. In these circumstances, how could they have easily put up with a new force that could deprive them of all these benefits within no time. Thus they forcibly kept away the Muslims from visiting the House of God and let loose a wave of terror and oppression on them forcing them to leave Makkah. It is in these circumstances that these verses were revealed. It is explained in them the purpose for which Abraham (sws) built this House, the content of his message and teachings of God regarding its sacred places. It is as if a mirror has been placed before the Quraysh in which they can see themselves and decide whether they are worthy of Abraham's heritage or have proven utterly unworthy of it. During this discussion, Muslims have also been encouraged and informed of the responsibilities of the rituals and sacred signs and places of this Houses which will soon be imposed on them.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses in the light of this background.

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Text and Translation

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَيَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ الَّذِيْ جَعَلْنٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ سَوَآءَ ۨ الْعَاكِفُ فِيْهِ وَ
الْبَادِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ فِيْهِ بِاِلْحَادٍ بِظُلْمٍ نُّذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿۲۵﴾ وَاِذْ بَوَّاْنَا لِاِبْرٰهِيْمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ اَنْ لَّا
تُشْرِكْ بِيْ شَيْـًٔا وَّطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّآئِفِيْنَ وَالْقَآئِمِيْنَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُوْدِ ﴿۲۶﴾ وَاَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَاْتُوْكَ
رِجَالًا وَّعَلٰى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَّاْتِيْنَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيْقٍ ﴿۲۷﴾ لِّيَشْهَدُوْا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ فِيْٓ اَيَّامٍ
مَّعْلُوْمٰتٍ عَلٰى مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَهِيْمَةِ الْاَنْعَامِ ۚ فَكُلُوْا مِنْهَا وَاَطْعِمُوا الْبَآئِسَ الْفَقِيْرَ ﴿۲۸﴾ ثُمَّ لْيَقْضُوْا
تَفَثَهُمْ وَلْيُوْفُوْا نُذُوْرَهُمْ وَلْيَطَّوَّفُوْا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيْقِ ﴿۲۹﴾ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّعَظِّمْ حُرُمٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهٗ عِنْدَ
رَبِّهٖ ؕ وَاُحِلَّتْ لَكُمُ الْاَنْعَامُ اِلَّا مَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْاَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوْا قَوْلَ الزُّوْرِ
﴿۳۰﴾ حُنَفَآءَ لِلّٰهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِيْنَ بِهٖ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَكَاَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ فَتَخْطَفُهُ الطَّيْرُ اَوْ تَهْوِيْ بِهِ
الرِّيْحُ فِيْ مَكَانٍ سَحِيْقٍ ﴿۳۱﴾ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّعَظِّمْ شَعَآئِرَ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوْبِ ﴿۳۲﴾ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا
مَنَافِعُ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ مَحِلُّهَآ اِلَى الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيْقِ ﴿۳۳﴾ وَلِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا لِّيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ
عَلٰى مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَهِيْمَةِ الْاَنْعَامِ ؕ فَاِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ فَلَهٗٓ اَسْلِمُوْا ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِيْنَ ﴿۳۴﴾ الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا ذُكِرَ
اللّٰهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ وَالصّٰبِرِيْنَ عَلٰى مَآ اَصَابَهُمْ وَالْمُقِيْمِي الصَّلٰوةِ ۙ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿۳۵﴾ وَالْبُدْنَ
جَعَلْنٰهَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ شَعَآئِرِ اللّٰهِ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا خَيْرٌ ۖ فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَا صَوَآفَّ ۚ فَاِذَا وَجَبَتْ جُنُوْبُهَا فَكُلُوْا
مِنْهَا وَاَطْعِمُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ سَخَّرْنٰهَا لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۳۶﴾ لَنْ يَّنَالَ اللّٰهَ لُحُوْمُهَا وَلَا
دِمَآؤُهَا وَلٰكِنْ يَّنَالُهُ التَّقْوٰى مِنْكُمْ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللّٰهَ عَلٰى مَا هَدٰىكُمْ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۳۷﴾

Indeed those who disbelieved and they stop people from the path of God and from the Sacred Mosque which We have made equally for all people whether they live there or outside it, [they have committed a grave oppression]. And those who intend something irreligious, some polytheistic practice in it, We shall make him taste a painful torment. (25)

And remember when We had made the place of this House an abode for Abraham with the directive: "Do not associate anyone with Me and keep my House pure for those who circumambulate, stand, kneel and prostrate and proclaim *ḥajj* among the people; they will come to you on foot and also on very frail she-camels from far off deep mountain passes

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so that people also reach their places of benefit and in certain specific days pronounce the name of God on the beasts God has blessed them with." Thus eat from them yourselves and also feed the needy inflicted with hunger. Then people should clean themselves of their dirt, fulfil their vows and circumambulate the ancient House. (26-29)

Diligently follow these things and he who honours the sanctities ordained by God, then this is better for him in the eyes of his Lord. And the cattle have been allowed to you except those which have been recited out to you. So, abstain from the filth of the idols and from falsehoods and while being fully devoted to God do not associate partners with Him. And he who associates partners with God, his example is as if he falls from the sky and birds snatch him away or take him away and throw him at a far off place. Diligently follow these things and he who reveres the symbols appointed by God, he should remember that this relates to the piety of the hearts. And there are various benefits in them for you until an appointed time. Then they have to be taken towards that ancient House of God for sacrifice. (30-33)

And for each community, We have regarded animal sacrifice a religious ritual so that the cattle God has given them, they pronounce God's name on them. Thus, your God is One; so, surrender yourselves to Him alone and give glad tidings to those whose hearts are bent down before Him. They are those whose hearts tremble when the name of God is mentioned before them. They are steadfast on any calamity they are afflicted with and are diligent in the prayer and who spend from whatever We have blessed them with. (34-35)

And We have included sacrificial camels also in the symbols of God for you. There is a lot of good for you in them. So pronounce God's name on them as well while you make them stand in rows. Thus when they fall on their sides, eat from them your selves and feed those also who are needy but show content and those also who ask. In this manner, We have put these animals into your service so that you may be grateful. And neither does their flesh reach God nor their blood; in fact, only your piety reaches Him. In this way, God has put them to your service so that the guidance God has blessed you with, you exalt God on it. And give glad tidings to those who are thorough. (36-37)

Explanation

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَيَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ الَّذِيْ جَعَلْنٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ سَوَآءَ ۨ الْعَاكِفُ فِيْهِ وَالْبَادِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ فِيْهِ بِاِلْحَادٍۢ بِظُلْمٍ نُّذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿۲۵﴾[27]

Grammatically this verse can be interpreted in two ways. One is to regard the first

27. Indeed those who disbelieved and they stop people from the path of God and from the Sacred Mosque which We have made equally for all people whether they live there or outside it, [they have committed a grave oppression]. And those who intend something irreligious, some polytheistic practice in it, We shall make him taste a painful torment.

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part of the verse اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ الَّذِيْ جَعَلْنٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ سَوَآءَ ِۨ الْعَاكِفُ فِيْهِ وَ الْبَادِ to be introductory and the actual inchoative (*mubtadā'*) to begin from وَ مَنْ يُّرِدْ فِيْهِ. The second is to regard an enunciative to the effect فَقَدْ ظَلَمُوْا ظُلْمًا كَبِيْرًا (then they committed a great injustice) suppressed. Both these interpretations are in line with linguistic interpretations. My mentor Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī prefers the first of these and I am more inclined to the second, and my translation is in accordance with it. However, in both cases, the implication of the verse will not be much different.

The words refer اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ to the Quraysh who had rejected the message of the Prophet (sws) and were also trying to forcibly stop Muslims from the religion of God. As indicated earlier, they had also deprived the Muslims of visiting the House of God in those times.

The words "which We have made equally for all people whether they live there or outside it" indicate the equality of rights of all those who visit the House of God, whether they reside within the limits of the Ḥaram or outside it. This is a hit on the monopoly of the Quraysh and especially on the leaders of the Banū Hāshim: such was their despotic control of the House of God that they could deprive anyone of its entry and permit anyone to visit it. The Qur'ān has called it absolutely unlawful and illicit because no tribe has been given this authority. No one has the right to restrict the entry of any person who wants to visit it to worship God and offer its rituals, whether he belongs to the Banū Hāshim and the Quraysh or not, whether he belongs to Makkah or not and whether he is an Arab or not. The only obligation of its residents is to keep it cleansed from the filth Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) had been directed to, the details of which are coming up. On the contrary, the Quraysh were guilty of stuffing the House of God with all the filth they had been asked to cleanse it from. In spite of this, they claimed to be its custodians and were stopping those servants of God from entering it who actually wanted to restore its Abrahamic glory and grandeur.

The words الْعَاكِفُ and الْبَادِ actually refer to those who reside within the limits of Ḥaram and those outside it, as referred to earlier. However, by using the word الْعَاكِفُ the real status of these residents is highlighted: their status is not of its rulers and monopoly-holders; they are in the capacity of those who do *i'tikāf* in it and serve all those who visit it. They are required to make it a centre of worship and pilgrimage for the rest of the world, as Ishmael (sws) had done so. Moreover, they must invite all the people to visit it and benefit from its blessings.

It is clearly evident from these words that as far as the Sacred Mosque is concerned no family or tribe can have its monopoly and control. Every single Muslim whether he belongs to the East or the West, is an Arab or a non-Arab has equal rights in it. As far as the people of Makkah or their government is concerned, they are not its rulers; their responsibility is to offer their services to maintain and protect it. It is their obligation to keep it cleansed from every semblance of polytheism and religious innovation and provide as much facilities as they can to those who visit it for worship. They do not

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have any authority whatsoever to deprive a Muslim residing in any part of the world to visit it except if it is proven that he is using the House of God against the objectives for which it has been built by Abraham (sws).

Just as all Muslims have equal rights regarding visiting the House of God, they also have equal responsibility in protecting it. If it is proven that those who are its custodians and protectors are guilty of impregnating it with the filth with which they were directed to cleans it of, it is the responsibility of all the Muslims of the world to stop them from this excess. These custodians cannot say that this is an internal matter and that no one has the right to interfere in it.

Similarly, if an enemy attacks it, the responsibility of defending and protecting it is the right of every Muslim of the world. In this matter, it would not be permissible to give any national or international treaty or some expediency any regard. If the government of some country stops people from partipating in this *jihād* even if the government is of some who are Muslims by name, it will be obligatory upon the believers to wage *jihād* against it. This is because the responsibility of protecting the House of God does not merely rest with the people of Makkah or their government. Every person who claims to be a Muslim is liable for it. This cannot in any way be regarded as an external dispute. Every Muslim equally shares the rights and obligations of the House of God. It is the heart of the Muslim *ummah*. Its existence guarantees the existence of the *ummah* and any disorder in it will create disorder in the whole *ummah*.

Stated above are the obvious consequences of the words of the Qur'ān. Our jurists have also inferred from them that within the precincts of the Haram none can own a house or receive rent from someone. I regard this inference to be unfounded. The جَعَلْنٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ سَوَآءَ ۨ الْعَاكِفُ فِيْهِ وَالْبَادِ words occur as attributes of the House of God and do not qualify the whole of Makkah or the limits of Ḥaram. For this reason, I would give preference to view of the Shafites who are not in favour of this restriction.

The preposition ب after مَنْ يُّرِدْ in وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ فِيْهِ بِاِلْحَادٍۢ بِظُلْمٍ نُّذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ shows that this verb encompasses the meaning of هَمَّ (intention). The word اِلْحَاد means deviation and being irreligious. The word بِظُلْمٍ is a permutative (badal) from بِاِلْحَادٍۢ and it is commonly used for polytheism in the Qur'ān.

The meaning of the verse is that such is this House that if a person intends to do something irreligious and that too as grave as polytheism in it, God will make him taste a painful torment. It may be kept in mind that there is a subtle difference between يُّرِدْ and هَمَّ. The former refers to the intention that has a whole thought process behind it while the latter to an intention that may be impulsive, as is evident from verse 74 of Sūrah Tawbah (وَهَمُّوْا بِمَا لَمْ يَنَالُوْا) and verse 24 of Sūrah Yūsuf (وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهٖ وَهَمَّ بِهَا).

The implication is that the etiquette of this House of God are very strict. Even impulsive and transient intentions are held accountable.

By adding the word بِظُلْمٍ to بِاِلْحَادٍۢ, it has been explained that when even a slight

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deviation will punished, how can polytheism which is the greatest oppression – which the Quraysh were guilty of – be permissible.

وَاِذْ بَوَّاْنَا لِاِبْرٰهِيْمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ اَنْ لَّا تُشْرِكْ بِيْ شَيْـًٔا وَّطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّآىِٕفِيْنَ وَالْقَآىِٕمِيْنَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُوْدِ ﴿٢٦﴾[28]

From here begins a mention of Abraham's history and that of the House of God so that it becomes fully evident to the Quraysh that they had totally ruined all the objectives for which Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) had built it. Thus they now deserve to be displaced from it, and the House of God be entrusted to those are worthy of it.

The verbal noun تبويه means "to make someone inhabit or reside or populate a place." The preposition ل after it shows that this place was not just reserved as an abode for Abraham (sws). It was also meant to be the place of residence of Ishmael (sws) and the rest of his progeny. Arabs were broadly aware of this history and used to feel proud that they were the progeny of Abraham (sws) and the inheritors of his religion. However, even before the arrival of Prophet Muḥammad (sws), the Jews had conspired to obliterate from the Torah or alter its verses which bore testimony to the relationship of Abraham (sws) with the House of God. The purpose was to disprove the advent of the last Prophet from the Ishmaelites. They fabricated historical facts that showed that after migration Abraham (sws) chose Syria as his place of residence and not Makkah and that the son offered for sacrifice was Isaac (sws) and not Ishmael (sws). After that they tried to alter facts about Marwah, Makkah and the House God and of all those things related to these. However, how could they succeed in hiding the actual history that was more radiant than the sun? Even now, there exist such testimonies in the Torah that are sufficient to expose this conspiracy. My mentor Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī has done precisely this in his book *Al-Rā'ī al-ṣaḥīḥ fī man huwa al-dhabīḥ* (The Actual Son offered for Sacrifice), and this exegesis too has been doing so at relevant instances. Readers may look what I have written while explaining verses 141-142 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

What is stated in اَنْ لَّا تُشْرِكْ بِيْ شَيْـًٔا وَّطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّآىِٕفِيْنَ وَالْقَآىِٕمِيْنَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُوْدِ is almost the same as what is mentioned in the following verse:

وَعَهِدْنَآ اِلٰٓى اِبْرٰهٖمَ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ اَنْ طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّآىِٕفِيْنَ وَالْعٰكِفِيْنَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُوْدِ (٢: ١٢٥)

And We bound Abraham and Ishmael: "Cleanse My House for those who do *ṭawāf*, observe *i'tikāf* and to kneel and prostrate [in it]." (2:125)

28. And remember when We had made the place of this House an abode for Abraham with the directive: "Do not associate anyone with Me and keep my House pure for those who circumambulate, stand, kneel and prostrate."

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It has been pointed out earlier that the section of verses under discussion are meant to explain to the Quraysh the objective for which God had deputed Abraham (sws) to build the House as well as other directives related to it and what they have ended up doing. In spite of this, they have a tyrannical control of this House and are stopping those want to once again revive this real objective.

وَاَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَاْتُوْكَ رِجَالًا وَّعَلٰى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَّاْتِيْنَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيْقٍ ﴿٢٧﴾[29]

The word رِجَالٌ is the plural of راجل and refers to pedestrians. ضَامِرٌ means a camel or a horse that has become frail because of journeying for a long distance. It is used equally for both the male and the female gender. The word كل is meant to emphasize it. For example, it is said هو العالم كل العالم (he is a brilliant scholar). The word فَجٌّ refers to the path between mountains, and the attribute عَمِيْقٌ qualifies it. Mountain passes which are narrow become deep if they are continually treaded upon.

In other words, while the first directive regarding the House of God that was given to Abraham (sws) was mentioned earlier, this verse mentions the second directive: he should proclaim among people that they should come for the pilgrimage of this House so that they come from near and distant places to earn its blessings. Here too the purpose was to point to the Quraysh that they too should have invited all mankind to come to visit this House; however, instead of doing this, they have done the exact opposite and have assumed dictatorial control of the House; when the real heirs of Abraham's religion want to visit it, they fiercely resist it.

The words … يَاْتُوْكَ رِجَالًا are actually the answer to the command clause (*jawāb amr*). For this reason, they form glad tidings for Abraham (sws): as soon as he will proclaim this invitation among people, they will come on foot and on the backs of camels to do the pilgrimage of the House. Because of continuous travel, these animals will become weak and the paths and passes of Makkah will deepen because of continuous influx of people.

The abundance of pilgrims and their immense passion and zeal that is evident from these metaphors is borne out by history as well. Even after the passage of thousands of years, the roads of Makkah and Madīnah and the fields of Minā and 'Arafāt bear witness how the glad tidings given to Abraham (sws) materialized and how people have continued to grow during these times. Earlier, only camels used to painstakingly help their riders for this purpose. Now with new advancements, buses, lorries, cars, aeroplanes and ships too have become part of this sacred fleet. The context of these verses shows that it is the will and liking of God that His servants have an ever-increasing passion for visiting His House. However, restrictions like visas, quotas and balloting which various Muslim governments have imposed to earn foreign exchange

29. And proclaim *ḥajj* among the people; they will come to you on foot and also on very frail she-camels from far off deep mountain passes.

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are absolutely uncalled for and in my opinion amount to stopping people from going to the House of God (صد عن المسجد الحرام). Even a non-Muslim government does not have the right to impose such restrictions. In fact, it will become evident from succeeding verses that this would amount to persecution. Muslims can wage *jihād* to curb this if they have the means.

لِّيَشْهَدُوْا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ فِيْٓ اَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُوْمٰتٍ عَلٰى مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَهِيْمَةِ الْاَنْعَامِ ۚ فَكُلُوْا مِنْهَا وَاَطْعِمُوا الْبَآئِسَ الْفَقِيْرَ ﴿۲۸﴾[30]

It has been explained in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah that the months of *ḥajj* were also very profitable for the Arabs with regard to trade and business. It was during this time that all the merchandise needed by them would reach their markets from other parts would. On the other hand, local goods too would get a chance to reach outside markets. If the *ḥajj* is offered and during this time such economically beneficial activities take place, then this is not against the temperament of the upright religion preached by Abraham (sws). In fact, this is a testimony to the fact that this religion which is so close to human nature is devoid of any speck of monasticism. So much so, even in the ritual of *ḥajj* – which is the closest to forsaking the pleasures of life – it maintains a balance between the spiritual and mundane affairs. Thus, the real thing is to maintain balance lest this ritual only becomes a means of business or political activities.

The section وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ فِيْٓ اَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُوْمٰتٍ عَلٰى مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَهِيْمَةِ الْاَنْعَامِ has been explained under verse 1 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah.

The expression اَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُوْمٰتٍ refers to the specific days prescribed for animal sacrifice during *ḥajj*. It has been explained at other instances of this exegesis that in the various activities of this world the time and season chosen for them carry significance and if these are not given due regard the required results cannot be achieved. Similarly in worship rituals too, place, time and part of the year hold importance. If they are not fully kept in consideration, they are deprived of their real benefit. The days of animal sacrifice have been fixed by God and His messenger, and they commemorate the sacrifice offered by Abraham (sws). Both these authorities have given certain expediencies too in these for the benefit of the people. To take advantage of these is not against piety. However, giving due regard to these days is essential in religion and this is entirely in harmony with the nature of this universe.

In this verse and in the next ones too, *dhibḥ* and *naḥr* are referred to as "pronouncing the name of God." This expression carries great significance: in the times of *jāhiliyyah*, the idolaters would dedicate all their sacrifices to their idols. In

30. "So that people also reach their places of benefit and in certain specific days pronounce the name of God on the beasts God has blessed them with." Thus eat from them yourselves and also feed the needy inflicted with hunger.

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order to circumvent this wrong practice, God regarded His own name to be compulsorily pronounced while slaughtering beasts. Without this pronouncement, taking the life of animal was regarded to be prohibited. The words عَلٰى مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَهِيْمَةِ state the reason for necessarily slaughtering animals in the name of God: it is God Who has blessed human beings with animals; hence pronouncing someone other's name while slaughtering them is ingratitude and is also tantamount to humiliating the animals. This style exhorts people to express gratitude to God. In other words, it is their duty to dedicate the animals to God as an expression of their gratitude because it is He Who has blessed them with this favour.

The words فَكُلُوْا مِنْهَا وَاَطْعِمُوا الْبَآئِسَ الْفَقِيْرَ point to the fact that the animal sacrifice people are being ordered to carry out is not because God receives any benefit from them. Neither their blood nor their meat reaches God. What people dedicate to God is in fact returned to them: they themselves can eat from them and also those who are needy. The example of animal sacrifice is just as if a person places his crown at the feet of the real king and the king after revering it through his feet places it back on the head of that person. Here it may be kept in mind that polytheistic nations believed that their idols eat and benefit from the food of the animals sacrificed for them. Even the Jews had this belief that there were certain sacrifices whose aroma pleased God very much. The Qur'ān has refuted these beliefs in this verse and in the succeeding ones.

ثُمَّ لْيَقْضُوْا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلْيُوْفُوْا نُذُوْرَهُمْ وَلْيَطَّوَّفُوْا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيْقِ ﴿٢٩﴾[31]

The word means "filth." The expression ضی تفثہ would mean "he cleansed himself from his dirt." This is a reference to the observance of the last rites of the *ḥajj*. Because of *iḥrām* restrictions and observance of *ḥajj* rituals, dirt and filth accumulates in the body and it is liking of the Almighty too that during these days people remain in this state of un-cleanliness. However, right after *ḥajj*, a pilgrim is required to prune his hair, have a bath and wear fresh clothes and if he has made a vow to sacrifice an animal, he should proceed to do it. After that he should do the *ṭawāf* and with it finish all the rituals.

The House of God is called عَتِيْقٌ in this verse. The word means "real and ancient." I have already explained under verse 125 of Sūrah al-Baqarah the reason for using this adjective: it is this house built by Abraham (sws) that is the real and ancient House of God and not the Bayt al-Maqdis as claimed by the Jews. In the first place, it was built much later by Solomon (sws) and in the second, it was built in a way that its place of sacrifice actually faced the House of God built by Abraham (sws) because it was the real direction towards his progeny was required to turn to for the relevant worship

31. Then people should clean themselves of their dirt, fulfil their vows and circumambulate the ancient House.

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rituals. Though the Jews have tried to hide all these facts but testimonies which point to them are still found in the Torah, and I have explained them in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّعَظِّمْ حُرُمٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهٗ عِنْدَ رَبِّهٖ ؕ وَاُحِلَّتْ لَكُمُ الْاَنْعَامُ اِلَّا مَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْاَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوْا قَوْلَ الزُّوْرِ ﴿۳۰﴾[32]

When the word ذٰلِكَ occurs in this way, it actually is a substitute of a whole sentence. Here it means: "These are the things which Abraham (sws) was informed of regarding the *ḥajj* and its rituals and people must attentively hear them out." This in fact is word of warning.

The directives given to Abraham (sws) end on this sentence. From the next one, directives are given to those who claimed to be the heirs of Abraham's legacy but were totally unaware of its responsibilities.

The expression حُرُمٰتِ اللّٰهِ means all those things which God has asked people to revere and respect. Examples include, the Ḥaram, the Mosque of God, the sacred months, sacrificial animals and their yokes etc. The tradition of revering all these has been handed down from Abraham (sws). The particular reason that here it has been pointed to show reverence to these sacred entities is that the Idolaters had altered all the sacred traditions of Abraham (sws) to suit their worldly interests. Consider, for example, the sacred months. They had invented a regulation called Nasī which aligned the lunar calendar with the solar one. This was beneficial for their trade activities. The verse actually directs the attention of its addressees to an important fact: it may well be that giving due regard to sacred entities may result in some loss in worldly benefits.

The words فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهٗ عِنْدَ رَبِّهٖ refer to the fact that people who respect these sacred entities in all circumstances in order to reap the blessings of the hereafter should remember that this attitude will be a source of great good for them.

The words وَاُحِلَّتْ لَكُمُ الْاَنْعَامُ اِلَّا مَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ with reference to the words عَلٰى مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَهِيْمَةِ الْاَنْعَامِ of verse 28 allude to the fact that totally baseless are the verdicts which the Idolaters have pronounced certain regarding various animals: they regard some animals to be permissible and some to be prohibited, some to be permissible for men and some for women, some are allowed as a means of transport and some are not. All this does not have any foundation in the religion of Abraham (sws). In this religion, only those beasts are prohibited which are being recited out in the Qur'ān.

Consider next the words فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْاَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوْا قَوْلَ الزُّوْرِ. This is a reference to the details that have been mentioned in Sūrah al-Án'ām (126-154). Since all this

32. Diligently follow these things and he who honours the sanctities ordained by God, then this is better for him in the eyes of his Lord. And the cattle have been allowed to you except those which have been recited out to you. So, abstain from the filth of the idols and from falsehoods.

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prohibition and allowance is based on polytheistic beliefs, it has been stated that they must cleanse themselves of the filth that has incriminated heir beliefs because of worshipping idols and must also abstain from ascribing falsehoods to God. In other words, it is they themselves who prohibit or allow something and in order to give their actions religious sanctity, they ascribe it to God. This is a grave lie and an imputation of falsehood to God (إِفْتِرَآءً عَلَى اللّٰهِ), as mentioned in verse 140 of Sūrah al-An'ām. They must abstain from this.

حُنَفَآءَ لِلّٰهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِيْنَ بِهٖ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَكَاَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ فَتَخْطَفُهُ الطَّيْرُ اَوْ تَهْوِيْ بِهِ الرِّيْحُ فِيْ مَكَانٍ سَحِيْقٍ ﴿۳۱﴾[33]

The second clause of the verse mentions a parable of polytheism: a person who perpetrates it, severs his connection from his real place. When this happens, it may well be that some devil may get hold of him. He becomes like a ship without anchor that may hit any rocky surface or like a wasp that can be blown away by the wind wherever it wants to. A person plunges from the height he has climbed to because of his belief in monotheism if he deprives himself of this belief.

It is evident from this that a person who adheres to polytheism does not harm God; he actually harms his own self. He deprives himself of the security and protection which God has blessed him through the belief of monotheism. Then he becomes susceptible to the deceptions and conspiracies of Satan.

ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّعَظِّمْ شَعَآئِرَ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوْبِ ﴿۳۲﴾[34]

This ذٰلِكَ is of the same sort as the one in verse 32. In other words, they are told that they should be fully mindful of the things that have been stated above and further fully keep in mind that the symbols appointed by God do not merely require outward respect: the piety of the hearts is also needed. These symbols or *sha'ā'ir* are appointed to portray some grand reality. Their real purpose is to remind people of that reality. If this reality is not understood, mere outward adherence to them will not fulfil one's obligation of reverence towards them. Only when a person is mindful of this reality that what is actually required of him stands carried out. In verse 37 ahead, the reality behind the grand symbol of animal sacrifice is stated thus: لَنْ يَّنَالَ اللّٰهَ لُحُوْمُهَا وَلَا دِمَآؤُهَا وَلٰكِنْ يَّنَالُهُ التَّقْوٰى مِنْكُمْ (neither will the meat of these sacrifices reach God nor their blood; only your piety would reach them).

About animal sacrifice, it is known that it commemorates the sacrifice of his dear son Ishmael (sws) offered by Abraham (sws). By doing so he showed that a Muslim

33. And while being fully devoted to God do not associate partners with Him. And he who associates partners with God, his example is as if he falls from the sky and birds snatch him away or take him away and throw him at a far off place.

34. Diligently follow these things and he who reveres the symbols appointed by God, he should remember that this relates to the piety of the hearts.

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should always be prepared to sacrifice the dearest of his possessions to submit to the will of God. If this essence of animal sacrifice is not kept in mind, then by slaughtering the animal, he may have apparently carried out the ritual of animal sacrifice, but he remained unaware of its essence. Needless to say, it is the essence of this ritual that connects us with God and not the meat or the blood of the animal.

لَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَنَافِعُ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ مَحِلُّهَآ اِلَى الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيْقِ ﴿٣٣﴾[35]

The preposition اِلٰى after word محل shows that there is a word suppressed after it which means that these animals should be then taken near the ancient house for sacrifice.

When the Idolaters would dedicate an animal for sacrifice, they would regard using it in any way to be prohibited. The Qur'ān has explained that this is not essential for revering these symbols: these animals can be reared and made use of until the time of sacrifice arrives. This use will not in any way lessen their reverence; however, when the time comes, it is essential that they be taken to the ancient house of God and sacrificed in His name only. If they are sacrificed at the altars of some others and in their names, it will violate their sanctity. The word ثُمَّ here refers to sequence of events and for this reason I regard this use to be permissible until the sacrificial animals reach the place of sacrifice.

وَلِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا لِّيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلٰى مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَهِيْمَةِ الْاَنْعَامِ ؕ فَاِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ فَلَهٗٓ اَسْلِمُوْا ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾[36]

Amongst the various meanings of the word مَنْسَك (as discussed under verse 200 of Sūrah al-Baqarah), here it means "animal sacrifice." The implication is that in the religions given by God, animal sacrifice is the most ancient worship ritual. It may be kept in mind that the sacrifice offered by Adam's sons Abel and Cain is mentioned both in the Bible and in the Qur'ān.

The words لِّيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلٰى مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَهِيْمَةِ الْاَنْعَامِ refer to the nature of this animal sacrifice stipulated by the Almighty: to express gratitude to Him by dedicating to Him the animals given by Him. In other words, this was the essence of animal sacrifice in all the religions. If someone other was dedicated its share, then this amounts to deviation from the true path connived by religious innovators.

The words فَاِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ فَلَهٗٓ اَسْلِمُوْا point to the real essence of animal sacrifice: fully

35. And there are various benefits in them for you until an appointed time. Then they have to be taken towards that ancient House of God for sacrifice.

36. And for each community, We have regarded animal sacrifice a religious ritual so that the cattle God has given them, they pronounce God's name on them. Thus, your God is One; so, surrender yourselves to Him alone and give glad tidings to those whose hearts are bent down before Him.

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devoting one's self to the one and only God without associating partners with Him.

Consider next the expression: وَ بَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِيْنَ. The word خبت means "a low-lying land." The word اخبات originates from it and means an expression of humility and meekness. It refers precisely to what is alluded to by the word اَسْلِمُوْا. The real spirit of Islam is humility. In other words, not only should a person outwardly submit to God, he should also inwardly show this compliance. Those who have this trait are in fact true believers and the glad tidings of God being happy with them and of Paradise are actually meant for them.

الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا ذُكِرَ اللّٰهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ وَالصّٰبِرِيْنَ عَلٰى مَآ اَصَابَهُمْ وَالْمُقِيْمِى الصَّلٰوةِ ۙ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿۳۵﴾[37]

This verse refers to some qualities of the مُخْبِتِيْنَ just mentioned. The first of these "whose hearts tremble when the name of God is mentioned before them" is in contrast to the traits of the arrogant mentioned in verse 72 ahead. The second "they are steadfast on any calamity they are afflicted with" is in contrast to what is stated about those in verse 11 who laid claim to faith but were not prepared to face adversities that may come as a result.

The expression وَ الْمُقِيْمِى الصَّلٰوةِ is an annexure (*muḍāf ilayh*). The link between perseverance and prayer has been discussed at some instances earlier in this exegesis. The expression does not merely mean that they pray; it means that they are very persistent in doing so.

The words "who spend from whatever We have blessed them with" not only urge the believers to spend for the cause of God but also point to the link between the prayer and this spending. It is essential to understand these linkages between individual components to understand the wisdom in religious directives.

وَالْبُدْنَ جَعَلْنٰهَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ شَعَآىِٕرِ اللّٰهِ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا خَيْرٌ ۖ فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَا صَوَآفَّ ۚ فَاِذَا وَجَبَتْ جُنُوْبُهَا فَكُلُوْا مِنْهَا وَ اَطْعِمُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ سَخَّرْنٰهَا لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۳۶﴾[38]

The word بُدْنَ is the plural of بُدْنَة and means a camel. However, here it specially refers to sacrificial camels and specifically the ones marked for sacrifice by making

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37. They are those whose hearts tremble when the name of God is mentioned before them. They are steadfast on any calamity they are afflicted with and are diligent in the prayer and who spend from whatever We have blessed them with.

38. And We have included sacrificial camels also in the symbols of God for you. There is a lot of good for you in them. So pronounce God's name on them as well while you make them stand in rows. Thus when they fall on their sides, eat from them your selves and feed those also who are needy but show content and those also who ask. In this manner, We have put these animals into your service so that you may be grateful.

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them wear collars. The words "symbols of God" which are mentioned as attributes of these camels point to this interpretation. Obviously every camel does not have this status and only those dedicated for sacrifice can be called so.

In verse 28 earlier, all four-legged beasts that are sanctioned for sacrifice are mentioned. After this camels were not needed to be mentioned; however, a specific reason occasioned their mention: camels were the most cherished animals for the Arabs. However, the Jews due to a dubious tradition that I have already indicated under the exegesis of verse 93 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān had regarded it to be prohibited. In fact, they worked a vicious propaganda against Islam for regarding camel sacrifice to be permissible. They alleged that how can this new religion be the one prescribed by Abraham (sws) because it has regarded an animal prohibited by all prophets of God a means of procuring? The Qur'ān has refuted this claim of the Jews in verse 93 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān and has demanded from the Jews that if they have any proof of the fact that Abraham (sws) had proscribed the camel, they should present it.

The reason for the camel being regarded to be *sha'ā'irullāh* (symbol of God) is stated as "there is a lot of good for you in them." In other words, they were very beneficial and favourable for the Arabs. I have explained under verse 92 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān that God likes the sacrifice of the most endeared animal. The camel was understandably the most cherished animal to the Arabs. It was their ship of the desert, companion of their stays and journeys and the sole means of their trade activities. They would try to gain the most benefit from its milk, meat and hide. The Qur'ān has repeatedly directed the attention of the Arabs towards this great favour with reference to these blessings and benefits it has. Obviously if the Arabs sacrifice something for the pleasure of their Lord which is so advantageous for their worldly benefits, it can also be a great source of attaining the nearness of God.

The words "So pronounce God's name on them as well while you make them stand in rows; thus when they fall on their sides, eat from them your selves and feed those also who are needy but show content and those also who ask" point to the way of sacrificing the camels. Making them stand in rows is like making them stand to pray before God and when the fall after the slaughter, it is as if they have prostrated before Him. Some historical narratives show that the Idolaters would regard it prohibited to benefit from animal sacrifice. This religious innovation has been set right here by the Qur'ān.

Those worthy of this meat are classified as "needy but show content and those also who ask." Verse 28 has referred to the real needy who are worthy of it but these words describe their two types. The type mentioned first shows the needy who are content and do not ask for their needs must be taken care of first. It is the duty of others to reach them because they cannot be expected to reach out to others. I have explained this under verse 273 of Sūrah al-Baqarah and also indicated that the attitude of the poor and needy liked by God is that of self-respect; nonetheless, in case of any compulsion, they can ask for help.

The words "in this manner, We have put these animals into your service so that you

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may be grateful" imply that it is merely a great favour of God that He has made a huge animal as the camel subservient to their wishes: they can benefit from it while travelling and also while residing, and whenever they want they can slaughter it. Had it not been God's will, they could not have made even the smallest of animals subservient to themselves. A natural obligation towards this favour of God is showing gratitude to Him, fulfilling His rights and not associating anyone in these.

لَنْ يَّنَالَ اللّٰهَ لُحُوْمُهَا وَلَا دِمَآؤُهَا وَلٰكِنْ يَّنَالُهُ التَّقْوٰى مِنْكُمْ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللّٰهَ عَلٰي مَا هَدٰىكُمْ ۭ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ۝۳۷[39]

The reality that was referred to in verse 31 earlier is reminded of in this verse from another aspect. In other words, if piety is not engendered in one's self, then slaughtering animals would merely amount to shedding his blood.

The words كَذٰلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللّٰهَ عَلٰي مَا هَدٰىكُمْ once again point to what is stated in كَذٰلِكَ سَخَّرْنٰهَا لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ of the previous verse. However, here it is pointed out that the way to show gratitude to God is express His oneness; in other words, while slaughtering the animals dedicated to God, only His name should be pronounced and none other besides Him. It is for this reason that while slaughtering animals, they are made to lie down in the direction of the House of God and the His name of pronounced acknowledging that the animal is purely dedicated to Him. Moreover, this verse also indicates the real motive of showing gratitude: receiving God's guidance of religion which Abraham acknowledged by offering His only son for sacrifice.

Consider next the words: وَبَشِّرِ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ. مُحْسِن refers to a person who is thorough and obeys every directive of God in letter and in spirit. Right before these words a part of the discourse is suppressed to the effect: "Those who slaughter animals keeping in view these conditions are the real thorough." After this suppression, it is stated that glad tidings of God being please with them and of Paradise should be given to such thorough individuals.

Section IV: Verses (38-41)

These verses were revealed in Madīnah and since, as specified in the beginning of the *sūrah*, they explain what is stated in earlier verses, they were placed here.

Readers may once again take a look at verse 25 where, while referring to the Quraysh, it was stated that those who are stopping people from Islam and the Sacred Mosque, even though none has any dictatorial rights on it, are very unjust and God will make such unjust people taste a painful torment. After this, in the light of the

39. And neither does their flesh reach God nor their blood; in fact, only your piety reaches Him. In this way, God has put them to your service so that the guidance God has blessed you with, you exalt God on it. And give glad tidings to those who are thorough.

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history of House of God and its rituals, it is shown that the Quraysh have totally violated its sanctity and hence have no right to remain its occupiers.

These verses obviously insinuated that the real custodians of the House of God are the Muslims and not the Quraysh. However, in Makkah, they were utterly helpless and were in no position to procure this right for themselves. After migrating to Madīnah when they assumed the form of a collectivity, the thought naturally arose in their minds that they should not be deprived of the blessings of this House; however, they were not aware how to go about it. It was obvious that when the Quraysh had so mercilessly expelled them, they would not easily give them permission for *ḥajj* or *'umrah*. So had Muslims endeavoured to offer these rituals, war would definitely have ensued and that too within the precincts of the Ḥaram in the sacred months, something regarded to be forbidden both in the *jāhiliyyah* customs and in Islam. The Quraysh and their allies – the People of the Book – also made this basis to stir propaganda against Islam and the Muslims alleging that they were violating the sanctity of these entities – something unheard of hitherto. All these issues were being faced by the Muslims at that time.

In the following verses, these questions have been answered.

Text and Translation

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُدٰفِعُ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُوْرٍ ﴿۳۸﴾ اُذِنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ يُقٰتَلُوْنَ بِاَنَّهُمْ ظُلِمُوْا ؕ وَ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيْرُ ۙ﴿۳۹﴾ الَّذِيْنَ اُخْرِجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ يَّقُوْلُوْا رَبُّنَا اللّٰهُ ؕ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ
اللّٰهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَّهُدِّمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَ بِيَعٌ وَّ صَلَوٰتٌ وَّ مَسٰجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيْهَا اسْمُ اللّٰهِ كَثِيْرًا ؕ وَ
لَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّنْصُرُهٗ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ ﴿۴۰﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ اِنْ مَّكَّنّٰهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ اَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتَوُا
الزَّكٰوةَ وَ اَمَرُوْا بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَ نَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿۴۱﴾

Indeed God shall defend those who have accepted faith. God never likes deceitful ingrates. Those against whom war is waged are granted permission of war because they have been oppressed and God indeed has the power to help them. The oppressed who were turned out of their houses without any justification only because they were guilty of saying: "God is our Lord." And if God did not continue to drive away people through one another, all monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques in which the name of God is abundantly taken all would have been razed down. And indeed God shall help those who will strive to help Him. Undoubtedly, God is powerful, dominant over all. These are people if We grant them sovereignty in this land, they shall be diligent in the prayer, pay *zakāh*, command good and forbid evil. And the fate of all matters is in the hands of God alone. (38-41)

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Explanation

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُدٰفِعُ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُوْرٍ ﴿۳۸﴾[40]

At the very start of this discussion, God has given glad tidings to oppressed Muslims: the time has now arrived when Muslims should protect and defend their rights; God will be with them and will help them at every step.

In اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُوْرٍ the word كُلَّ is to emphasize the attributes mentioned and خَوَّانٍ كَفُوْرٍ refers to the Quraysh. The attribute خَوَّانٍ means a person who is utterly dishonest, is a traitor and who does not honour his promise. It alludes to the fact that these people had broken all their promises and commitments on the basis of which they had been granted the custodianship of the House of God. They had totally dishonoured the purpose for which the House of God had been built by Abraham (sws). They had also completely thrown into oblivion the responsibilities that had been imposed by Abraham (sws) on his progeny regarding this House. For this reason, they no longer deserved to be its custodians and God never likes such deceitful ingrates.

The attribute كَفُوْرٍ with خَوَّانٍ expresses their ingratitude. It has been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah that the status of religious and political leadership acquired by the Quraysh over all of Arabia was entirely because of the House of God. However, instead of duly valuing this favour and being grateful to their Lord, they assumed a dictatorial role in its custodianship: they enjoyed all the rights as a result of it but totally forgot their own obligations towards it. In fact, by taking opposite measures, they were responsible of showing utter disrespect to the House. Thus the verse states that what relationship can God have with such traitors and ingrates? He never likes such deceitful people who are so ungrateful. The expression "never likes" in fact means that God hates such devious individuals. The respite that was ordained for them has now expired; the time has come that God will cleanse His House from their filth and consign its custodianship to those who will duly discharge their responsibilities towards this House of God built by Abraham (sws).

اُذِنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ يُقٰتَلُوْنَ بِاَنَّهُمْ ظُلِمُوْا ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيْرُ ۙ﴿۳۹﴾[41]

What exactly were the Muslims allowed to do as a result of this permission (اُذِنَ) is suppressed here. The implication is that those Muslims have been permitted to wage war against whom war is waged. Since by that time Muslims were not organized as a

40. Indeed God shall defend those who have accepted faith. God never likes deceitful ingrates. Those against whom war is waged are granted permission of war because they have been oppressed and God indeed has the power to help them.

41. The oppressed who were turned out of their houses without any justification only because they were guilty of saying: "God is our Lord."

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collectivity, they were not allowed to wage war in spite of enduring all kinds of oppression; they had in fact been directed to show patience. This is because in the absence of any collectivity, any war waged by individuals cannot curb disorder and create justice. It is known that in Islam, war can only be waged for the establishment of a system of justice and truth. Once Muslims migrated to Madīnah, circumstances changed. For this reason, they were allowed to take up arms in defence. This permission was also necessary because the matter related to the Ḥaram and its boundaries. Muslims could not have taken any step regarding the Ḥaram unless they were given permission by God and His messenger. It may be noted that only permission to defensive warfare is given here because until that time Muslims could not bear any burden beyond it. As far as the question of the permission to offensive warfare is concerned, readers can look up my exegesis of Sūrah al-Tawbah.

The words بِاَنَّهُمْ ظُلِمُوْا express another reason for this permission: in the first place, every individual or group has the right to defend; moreover, Muslims have been a target of oppression. The details of this oppression are mentioned in the next verse.

The words وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيْرُ ۙ further reinforce the above mentioned promise of God in helping Muslims defending themselves, and at the same time warn the disbelievers of the Quraysh. In other words, no one should think that these few Muslims are helpless and there is none to help them: God is fully capable of helping them; once He starts helping them, no force in the world can defeat them.

الَّذِيْنَ اُخْرِجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّقُوْلُوْا رَبُّنَا اللّٰهُ ۭ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللّٰهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَّهُدِّمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَّ صَلَوٰتٌ وَّمَسٰجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيْهَا اسْمُ اللّٰهِ كَثِيْرًا ۭ وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّنْصُرُهٗ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ ۝[42]

The words الَّذِيْنَ اُخْرِجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ explain the oppression referred to in the previous verse that Muslims were facing: they were expelled from their homes without any crime. This style encompasses all the hardships and afflictions they had gone through: no one leaves his house and homeland unless he is utterly compelled.

The sentence is اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّقُوْلُوْا رَبُّنَا اللّٰهُ very eloquent in nature. It means that if there is any offence committed by these oppressed people, it is their declaration that God is their Lord. In other words, their greatest virtue and the greatest truth they preached became their greatest sin. They have been cornered so much in this that they were forced to leave their homes.

Some people have interpreted this last sentence to refer to the fact that here the Qur'ān is presenting this declaration of monotheism to imply that it is nothing to show

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42. And if God did not continue to drive away people through one another, all monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques in which the name of God is abundantly taken all would have been razed down. And indeed God shall help those who will strive to help Him. Undoubtedly, God is powerful, dominant over all.

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aversion to and the disbelievers of the Quraysh are needlessly showing it and as a result trying to harass Muslims; what difference does it make if someone believes in one God only. Those have interpreted this verse thus are perhaps a little naïve. The Quraysh were not foolish enough like them to not understand the implications of these words. They knew its far reaching consequences and hence they were its enemies. In this way, they actually became the enemies of the greatest truth. The Qur'ān has directed their attention to this foolishness of theirs in a very subtle way.

The word صَوَامِع is the plural of صومعة. It is primarily used for the lofty mountains and buildings in which Christian monks would live in seclusion. Hence if it is translated as monastries, it would be very apt.

The word بِيَع is the plural of بيعة. It is used for the worship places of the both the Jews and the Christians. However, since a separate word صَلَوٰتٌ is used ahead for the worship places of the Jews, hence this word must be considered specific to Christian places of worship. Because of their systen of Raḥbāniyyah, both churches and monastries held equal importance to them.

The word صَلَوٰتٌ is the plural of صلوة. It refers to places in which the Jews offered the prayer. The Jews called their prayer صلوتا which is an Aramaic word.

The word مَسٰجِدُ is commonly used for the mosques of Muslims.

Now the wisdom for allowing the believers to take up arms – so much so if they are attacked in the Ḥaram and within its boundaries – is being mentioned. They have the right to defend themselves and can hope that God will help them. For reasons stated in this verse, God has always allowed His prophets and messengers to wage *jihād* and they have waged it to protect their religious values and symbols. Similarly, at the time of revelation of this verse, this permission was granted to Muslims to get ready to protect the Ḥaram and their religious symbols. If its current deceitful and fraudulent claimants to custodianship imepede them in any way, they should be paid back in their own coin.

It may be noted that the Quraysh seeing the enthusiasm of the Muslims already had an inkling of what was to come. Thus they launched a propaganda that these proponents of the new religion are not even caring about the sanctity of the Ḥaram and its boundaries. The Jews and Christians too joined them in this vicious campaign and regarded the attitude of the Muslims to be against sentiments of religiosity. At other instances too, the Qur'ān has answered these claimants of religiosity and here too. It is said that if waging *jihād* for the cause of God is against this sentiment, it would mean that evil is given full freedom to wreck havoc and obliterate religion itself.

It may be noted, as referred to earlier, that first of all the monastries and churches of the Christians have been mentioned. The reason for this foremost mention is that they it was they who were the most critical of the Muslim spirit of *jihād*, as will become evident from the exegesis of Sūrah al-Ḥadīd. Even though there were other reasons for their opposition (as will be discussed at an appropriate instance), their concept of *raḥbāniyyah* had a great role in it. The Qur'ān has criticized this concept here: those

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who in their frenzy of enmity against Islam are regarding the spirit of *jihād* to be against religiosity should not disregard the fact that if this concept pre-existed, none of God's worship places on earth would have survived.

It may also be noted here that the worship places of the Jews and the Christians mentioned here primarily had the same status as mosques of the Muslims. Deviance resulted in them when the People of the Book got incriminated with polytheism and religious innovation.

The words وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّنْصُرُهٗ futher emphasize the promise of divine help referred to earlier. At the same time, some new important aspects are pointed out as well:

Firstly, those who strive to protect the symbols of God, in fact help their Lord. Hence, it is essential for God to help them in return.

Secondly, only those people are worthy of God's help who fulfil their own obligation regarding the cause of truth. He does not help those, who like the Israelites demand that God should provide them with a bed of roses without any effort from their own side.

There are several aspects worthy of attention in the sentence: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ

– Since God is mighty and powerful, He does not need the help of anyone. Those who help Him in fact open the doors for God's help for themselves.

– Muslims should not feel scared because of their own small number and the large number of their enemies. The majestic God Who is promising to help them is mighty and dominant.

– The disbelievers after witnessing the current situation of the Muslims must not be led to think that these few people cannot achieve anything. These drops will now become a storm because God is behind them and God is mighty and powerful.

اَلَّذِيْنَ اِنْ مَّكَّنّٰهُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ اَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَمَرُوْا بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿۴۱﴾[43]

Just as the word "land" means Makkah in verse 41 of Sūrah al-Ra'd and verse 44 of Sūrah al-Anbiyā', concomitant indications show that here too it refers to the land of Makkah because the *jihād* whose permission has been granted here primarily relates to the liberation of Ḥaram. The verse implies that the current deceitful and tyrannical occupants of the House of God have totally dishonoured the objectives for which Abraham (sws) made his progeny inhabit this land. So, now if God grants political authority to His servants through His help, they will carry out the obligations stated in it. Readers may take a look at verses 124-148 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. It was precisely these obligations for which God had made this land a place of centre for Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). The style of the verse shows that the Quraysh had totally

43. These are people if We grant them sovereignty in this land, they shall be diligent in the prayer, pay *zakāh*, command good and forbid evil. And the fate of all matters is in the hands of God alone.

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ignored these obligations.

This verse forms the first glad tidings of political authority of Muslims in this world. It begins with the land of God's House – which is like the heart of the Muslim community. If it is in order, there is order among the rest of the Muslims. The same obligations are imposed on Muslims wherever God gives them political authority. If they do not fulfil them, then just as to God the political authority of others is illegal of such a land, same is the case with that of the Muslims.

The prayer and the *zakāh* are the binding forces of the *sharī'ah.* If they are mentioned, it is as if the whole of the *sharī'ah* has been mentioned.

The words معروف (good) and منکر (evil) have also been discussed in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Some simpletons argue that when the Qur'ān has allowed people to follow the *ma'rūf* (معروف), then it would mean that every group and nation can follow their own *ma'rūf.* Such people should know that in those spheres of life in which God and His messenger have ascertained *ma'rūf* and *munkar*, no one has any discretion. However, while remaining within the limits of the *sharī'ah*, people of every nation can follow their own *ma'rūf.*

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Section V: Verses (42-57)

Verse 41 has the status of an explanatory verse that occurs as a parenthetical sentence. The previous discourse now resumes. By citing the history of the previous prophets and their rejecters, the Prophet (sws) and his companions are assured that all promises of God are destined to be fulfilled and so are His warnings. If there are any delays, it is because of the established practice of God in this matter. In this way, God tests His pious servants and conclusively communicates the truth to His adversaries. If people have eyes, they can see the signs and remnants of this established practice of God at every step; however, those whose hearts' eyes have gone blind, they cannot be influenced in any way.

In this regard, the Prophet (sws) is also directed to warn his adversaries in a clear way of the imminent danger while ignoring their attitude. There is nothing strange if they try to impede his preaching. Every prophet and messenger has faced such circumstances. However, the word of God was fulfilled and all the mischief worked by their diabolical opponents was put to shame by Him. If God has allowed such elements to make hey, the reason is to make the truth fully blossom and give opportunity to men of faith and understanding accept it with full insight. After that they will never waver.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

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Text and Translation

وَاِنْ يُّكَذِّبُوْكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوْحٍ وَّ عَادٌ وَّ ثَمُوْدُ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَ قَوْمُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَ قَوْمُ لُوْطٍ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَّ اَصْحٰبُ
مَدْيَنَ ۚ وَكُذِّبَ مُوْسٰى فَاَمْلَيْتُ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ ثُمَّ اَخَذْتُهُمْ ۚ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيْرِ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَا وَ
هِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ فَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلٰى عُرُوْشِهَا وَبِئْرٍ مُّعَطَّلَةٍ وَّ قَصْرٍ مَّشِيْدٍ ﴿٤٥﴾ اَفَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَتَكُوْنَ لَهُمْ
قُلُوْبٌ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ بِهَآ اَوْ اٰذَانٌ يَّسْمَعُوْنَ بِهَا ۚ فَاِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْاَبْصَارُ وَلٰكِنْ تَعْمَى الْقُلُوْبُ الَّتِيْ فِي الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿٤٦﴾
وَ يَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ وَلَنْ يُّخْلِفَ اللّٰهُ وَعْدَهٗ ؕ وَاِنَّ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ كَاَلْفِ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَ
كَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ اَمْلَيْتُ لَهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ ثُمَّ اَخَذْتُهَا ۚ وَاِلَيَّ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٤٨﴾ قُلْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا لَكُمْ نَذِيْرٌ
مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّ رِزْقٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ سَعَوْا فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا مُعٰجِزِيْنَ
اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٥١﴾ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ وَّلَا نَبِيٍّ اِلَّآ اِذَا تَمَنّٰى اَلْقَى الشَّيْطٰنُ فِيْٓ
اُمْنِيَّتِهٖ ۚ فَيَنْسَخُ اللّٰهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطٰنُ ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ اللّٰهُ اٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٥٢﴾ لِّيَجْعَلَ مَا يُلْقِي
الشَّيْطٰنُ فِتْنَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ وَّالْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ لَفِيْ شِقَاقٍ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَّ لِيَعْلَمَ
الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ اَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٖ فَتُخْبِتَ لَهٗ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهَادِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِلٰى
صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فِيْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ حَتّٰى تَاْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً اَوْ يَاْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابُ
يَوْمٍ عَقِيْمٍ ﴿٥٥﴾ اَلْمُلْكُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلّٰهِ ؕ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فِيْ جَنّٰتِ النَّعِيْمِ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَ
الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ﴿٥٧﴾

And if these people are denying you, then this is nothing strange? Before them, the nation of Noah, the ‘Ād, the Thamūd, the nation of Abraham, the nation of Lot and the people of Madyan have denied. And Moses too had been similarly denied. So I gave some reprieve to these disbelievers, then seized. So, see how My curse was! And how many a settlement have We destroyed while they showed injustice. So, now they are lying on their roofs. And how many useless wells and fortified palaces are left deserted. Have these people not walked about in the land so that their hearts could have become such that they could have understood from them and ears could have become such that they could have listened from them because the eyes on the faces are not blind. In fact, those hearts become blind which are in the chests. (42-46)

And these people are asking you to hasten the punishment, whereas God is One Who never breaks His promise. And one day of your Lord is equal in count to your one thousand years. And how many a settlement We gave respite in spite of their

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oppression; then seized them and all have to return to Me alone. (47-48)

Tell them: O People! I am only an open warner for you. Then those who accepted faith and did righteous deeds, for them is forgiveness and an honourable sustenance. And those who strive to oppose Our revelations, it is they who are the companions of Hell. (49-51)

And whichever messenger or prophet We sent before you, then whenever he desired something, Satan caused disruption in his desire. Thus God obliterates the whisperings of Satan; then God strengthens His revelations and God is knowing and wise. This happens so that God makes these whisperings of Satan a means of trial for those who have an ailment in their hearts and who are hard-hearted. And indeed, these unjust people have gone very far in their hostility. And this also happens because those who have been given knowledge fully know that the truth is from your Lord. Thus, their faith should be strengthened on it and their hearts bow down before it. And God shall definitely show the straight path to those who have accepted faith. (52-54)

And these people who have denied, will continue to remain in doubt about this knowledge until when suddenly the Hour of Judgement hovers over their heads or the torment of a baleful day descends on them. On that day, God will have the sole authority. It is He Who will decide between them. So, those who would have accepted faith and would have also done righteous deeds shall be in orchards of delight and those who disbelieved and rejected Our revelations, then it is for them that there is a humiliating torment. (55-57)

Explanation

وَاِنۡ يُّكَذِّبُوۡكَ فَقَدۡ كَذَّبَتۡ قَبۡلَهُمۡ قَوۡمُ نُوۡحٍ وَّ عَادٌ وَّ ثَمُوۡدُ ﴿۴۲﴾ وَ قَوۡمُ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ وَ قَوۡمُ لُوۡطٍ ﴿۴۳﴾ وَّ اَصۡحٰبُ مَدۡيَنَ ۚ وَ كُذِّبَ مُوۡسٰى فَاَمۡلَيۡتُ لِلۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ثُمَّ اَخَذۡتُهُمۡ ۚ فَكَيۡفَ كَانَ نَكِيۡرِ ﴿۴۴﴾[44]

The denial of Moses has been mentioned in the passive voice (كُذِّبَ مُوۡسٰى), whereas the prophets that are referred to before him are mentioned with reference to their respective nations. The reason for this could be that Moses (sws) was never denied by his nation; he was denied by the Pharaoh and his people. Right before Muḥammad (sws), it was he who was given the *sharī'ah* and it was he whose account could have been most known to the last prophet. For this reason, without any prior introduction, as a final word on the subject. it was stated that just before Muḥammad (sws), Moses (sws) had been denied.

The word نَكِيۡرِ is actually نَكِيۡرِي. The ی has been stripped off and substituted by the vowel sound as its remnant. This is a conventional occurrence in the Arabic language

44. And if these people are denying you, then this is nothing strange? Before them, the nation of Noah, the 'Ād, the Thamūd, the nation of Abraham, the nation of Lot and the people of Madyan have denied. And Moses too had been similarly denied. So I gave some reprieve to these disbelievers; then seized them. So, see how My curse was!

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in deference to the requisites of rhyme. Lexicographers have generally regarded نَكِيْر to mean "denial." I do not agree with this interpretation. It is evident from classical Arabic literature that it does not merely mean denial; it in fact refers to a denial punctuated with hate and aversion.

In these verses, the Prophet (sws) is assured that the way his nation is dealing with him is not the slightest different from how other nations dealt with their messenger. It is history repeating itself. The implication is that he is not at fault in any way and nor are his efforts lacking any preparation. He is impeccable in this matter. His nation is only following their predecessors. He should continue to do his work and leave these people to themselves.

The words فَاَمْلَيْتُ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ ثُمَّ اَخَذْتُهُمْ ۚ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيْرِ refer to the fact that nations who denied their messengers were not immediately seized by God. They were given a considerably long period of respite. However, this respite did not induce them to reform themselves; it only increased their rebelliousness. So God then seized them and that too in a way that they were utterly wiped off the face of the earth. The Prophet (sws) is told that his nation too will meet this fate if they do not mend their ways.

فَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ فَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلٰى عُرُوْشِهَا وَبِئْرٍ مُّعَطَّلَةٍ وَّ قَصْرٍ مَّشِيْدٍ ﴿45﴾

The expression قَصْرٍ مَّشِيْدٍ refers to huge fortified palaces. In accordance with linguistic principles, just as the adjective مُّعَطَّلَةٍ qualifies بِئْرٍ, similarly, a corresponding adjective for قَصْرٍ مَّشِيْدٍ is suppressed due to this concomitant indication.

What is mentioned in the previous verse is borne evidence to in this verse through signs and remnants in the lands Arab caravans would pass by. All these accounts are famously preserved in classical Arabic literature.

The word وَ هِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ is in the capacity of an accusative of state (*ḥāl*). It has been explained at various instances that on such occasions injustice refers to injustice nations are themselves guilty of by being ungrateful to God's favours and by adhering to polytheism. This is a reference to the fact that the destruction nations suffer is merely accidental or because of change of fortune, as is understood by the foolish. Such calamities are governed by moral principles. Nations become guilty of showing ingratitude to God and this injustice decimates their individual and collective morals. The consequence of all this is that first their glory is shattered and their existence is routed.

The words فَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلٰى عُرُوْشِهَا portray their situation. When huge buildings are razed to ground, their destruction begins with their roofs. Before they are deserted, these roofs became old and decrepit and fall down. After that, the walls become unsafe and are razed to ground because rains.

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45. And how many a settlement have We destroyed while they showed injustice. So, now they are lying on their roofs. And how many useless wells and fortified palaces are left deserted.

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The expression بِئْرٍ مُّعَطَّلَةٍ is coordinated to قَرْيَةٍ. It may be kept in mind that because of water deficiency in Arabia, wells and fountains had great significance. People would inhabit only those places where water was available and wells could be dug. As a result, the land around these wells and fountains would bustle with activity the most. Thus the expression "deserted wells" actually refers to the fact that all activity around them had ceased.

An adjective after قَصْرٍ مَّشِيْدٍ is suppressed, as pointed out earlier. This adjective should also portray desertion and disuse. Thus the complete meaning would be to the effect: How many grand and towering castles are lying deserted; in their balconies prominent chiefs would prostrate; but now they are only populate by nests of birds.

اَفَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ فَتَكُوْنَ لَهُمْ قُلُوْبٌ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ بِهَآ اَوْ اٰذَانٌ يَّسْمَعُوْنَ بِهَا ۚ فَاِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْاَبْصَارُ وَ لٰكِنْ تَعْمَى الْقُلُوْبُ الَّتِىْ فِى الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿۴۶﴾[46]

The implication of this verse is that God has left these remnants and signs intact in order that people observe them and learn a lesson so that their hearts are able to reflect and their ears are able to hear. This is because the real tragedy of this world is not that eyes become blind; it is in fact the blindness of hearts. The implication is that if a person loses eyesight but has a vibrant heart, he can still observe all realities in spite of being blind. However, if the eyes of the hearts turn blind, he would be able to observe from his external eyes but understand nothing.

Here the mention of قُلُوْبٌ with فِى الصُّدُوْرِ shows that a word to the effect فى الروؤس is suppressed after الْاَبْصَارُ. This style in which corresponding parts of a sentence are suppressed necessitates this. Here since people who lack insight are being described, it was essential that the heart be portrayed with respect to its locus: real blindness is the blindness of the heart and the rejecters of the messenger are inflicted by this blindness. People should not think that they can see if the eyes on their face are open because the radiance of insight in the eyes comes from the heart and the eyes of their hearts are totally blind.

It may be kept in mind that Arab poets would wail profusely at the remnants of their beloved's residence. They would even fondly remember her stove and mill, weep over them and make others weep too. However, this was the ultimate that they could access. They never tried to look beyond this to learn a lesson from the ruins of their land that were conveying a thousand tales to them through their very existence. Similar is the case of our present day archaeologists. They have dug deep in the

46. Have these people not walked about in the land so that their hearts could have become such that they could have understood from them and ears could have become such that they could have listened from them because the eyes on the faces are not blind. In fact, those hearts become blind which are in the chests.

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ground to discover rare artefacts and filled museums with them. However, their research is only centred around determining if a particular object discovered belongs to a five thousand year old civilization or a seven thousand year old one. The actual reality to which these objects and ruins point have neither been understood by them nor perhaps is there any such chance in the future. The irony is that it is for this very purpose that these signs and ruins were preserved by God because it is only through this reminder that people are equipped with insight.

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ وَلَنْ يُّخْلِفَ اللّٰهُ وَعْدَهٗ ؕ وَاِنَّ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ كَاَلْفِ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّوْنَ ﴿۴۷﴾[47]

The implication of this verse is that people regard God's calendar to be the same as theirs. Since these events have a specific time frame in His calendar which is much longer than that of human beings, they think that whatever they are being threatened with is fake since it is not materializing. The two calendars are vastly different and these people must realize this.

The count of years mentioned here to understand God's calendar is more of a hypothetical example and the words "like a thousand years" are themselves pointing towards this. The actual reality of these days is known to God only. Just as this comparison occurs in the Qur'ān, it also occurs in the Psalms and the Gospels. Thus it is stated:

> But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. (2 Peter, 3:8)

Just as the Qur'ān mentions the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, the Torah also does so. Sūrah al-Sajdah has stated the break up of stages of creation in each of these six days. Obviously, these days do not refer to earth days. These are the days of God whose length is only known to Him. Sufficient for us is the knowledge that God has created separate worlds and every world has a distinct and separate system. It would be incorrect to regard them as analogous to one another.

It is also evident from the Qur'ān that in the world of God, there are certain days which are even longer. For example, the day in which the angels and Gabriel reach God's presence is equal to fifty thousand earth years:

تَعْرُجُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَالرُّوْحُ اِلَيْهِ فِيْ يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهٗ خَمْسِيْنَ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ (٧٠: ٤)

> The angels and the Spirit ascend towards Him in a Day the measure of which is fifty thousand years. (70:4)

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47. And these people are asking you to hasten the punishment, whereas God is One Who never breaks His promise. And one day of your Lord is equal in count to your one thousand years.

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Some people have interpreted the word "day" in the verse under discussion to refer to the Day of Judgement and the length of the day as a metaphor for the severity of its punishment. This interpretation is not only against the context but also parallel verses of the Qur'ān. In particular, ascribing this interpretation to celebrated authorities like Ibn 'Abbās (rta) and Mujāhid is absolutely incorrect. However, after the explanation presented above, no need now remains to refute it.

وَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ اَمْلَيْتُ لَهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ ثُمَّ اَخَذْتُهَا ۚ وَاِلَيَّ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۴۸﴾[48]

This verse is an answer to those who were asking to hasten the punishment: they are told that they must not show arrogance if they are being given respite from God. They will meet the fate mentioned in the verse if they continue with their ill-ways. They must also remember that the final return will be towards God. Everyone is destined to face Him in the Hereafter. Neither their companions and supporters nor their alleged deities and intercessors will help them.

قُلْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا لَكُمْ نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿۴۹﴾ فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّ رِزْقٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿۵۰﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ سَعَوْا فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا مُعٰجِزِيْنَ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿۵۱﴾[49]

Consider the expression نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ (open warner). It was a convention among the Arabs that where a caravan stopped for a break, a person guarded that place while being stationed at a high spot. If he felt danger from around him, he would take off his clothes and become naked. He would declare that danger was lurking near after which all men would unsheathe their swords and get ready to defend. That person was called "the naked warner." Since this expression was indecent and therefore inapt for a prophet, the Qur'an changed it into a decent one: "open warner." However, here the insinuation here to is to "the naked warner." Just as the naked warner would inform his nation of an imminent danger, the Prophet (sws) as an open warner should inform his people of this danger. Making them aware is all that he can do. Making them see it or protect them from it is not his responsibility. If even after these clear warnings they pay no heed, they themselves are responsible for the consequences. This evident from the emphasis found in اِنَّمَآ.

Verses 50 and 51 under discussion actually form the content of the warning which the Prophet (sws) has been asked to deliver his people in unequivocal terms. Though it begins with glad tidings for the believers, these tidings are actually a prelude to the

48. And how many a settlement We gave respite in spite of their oppression; then seized them and all have to return to Me alone.

49. Tell them: O People! I am only an open warner for you. Then those who accepted faith and did righteous deeds, for them is forgiveness and an honourable sustenance. And those who strive to oppose Our revelations, it is they who are the companions of Hell.

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warnings. This is because these verses are directed at the arrogant among the Quraysh. The glad tidings are an effective strike on their arrogance.

The words "honourable sustenance" (رِزْقٌ كَرِيْمٌ) is the consequence of forgiveness and a comprehensive expression for all the favours of Paradise.

The word مُعٰجِزة means to compete with one another to defeat someone. Here it refers to the efforts the disbelievers were undertaking to defeat the Prophet (sws).

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ وَّلَا نَبِيٍّ اِلَّآ اِذَا تَمَنّٰٓى اَلْقَى الشَّيْطٰنُ فِيْٓ اُمْنِيَّتِهٖ ۚ فَيَنْسَخُ اللّٰهُ مَا يُلْقِى الشَّيْطٰنُ ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ اللّٰهُ اٰيٰتِهٖ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ۙ﴿۵۲﴾[50]

About تَمَنّٰٓى it is written:[51] يطلق عند اهل العربية على طلب حصول الشیء علی سبیل المحبة و علی الکلام الدال علی هذاالطلب (in the opinion of experts of the Arabic language, this word means to lovingly desire something and it is also used for a discourse which corroborate this desire). I have referred to this citation because in my opinion this is the correct meaning of the word in the light of classical Arabic literature. Its various inflections have been used in the Qur'ān on seven or eight occasions. From the same root is the word اُمْنِيَّةٌ which is used both in its singular and plural forms on seven or eight occasions. At every place and in every form, its real essence exists. Its meaning is "to desire, to wish, to yearn, to show courage, to make an appeal or appease for a purpose." Similarly, اُمْنِيَّةٌ means wish, courage and appeal. I am unaware how people have inserted the meaning of "reading" in this word. I have been unable to find the word used in this meaning anywhere in classical Arabic literature even though this is word abundantly used in Arabic. Some exegetes have cited a couplet to substantiate this meaning. However, in the first place what significance can a little known couplet have to deflect the meaning of a very well-known word from its common meaning. Moreover, this couplet too is a fabrication and I can prove it to be so. However, not much can be gained from prolonging a needless discussion. The fact that Ibn Manẓūr[52] too has referred to this meaning of the word carries no significance in my opinion. In spite of acknowledging all his expertise, I have already referred to this shortcoming of his in the foreword of this exegesis that at times he cites the meaning of a word from linguists that lack corroborative evidence. Since, his lexicon is very highly regarded, those who are not critics of the language adopt such meanings even though until such meanings are not substantiated through linguistic usage, they have no importance. Summing up, it can be said that there is no possibility of regarding this word to mean

50. And whichever messenger or prophet We sent before you, then whenever he desired something, Satan caused disruption in his desire. Thus God obliterates the whisperings of Satan; then God strengthens His revelations and God is knowing and wise.

51. Al-Thānawī, *Kashshāf iṣṭilāḥāṭ al-funūn*, vol. 1, 509,

52. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 15, 295.

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recital or reading.

Now let us reflect on the meaning of the verse and its components.

By referring to the opponents' race of outdoing one another mentioned in the previous verse, the Prophet (sws) is being assured that he is not the only person facing this situation. All prophets and messengers before him encountered similar circumstances. Whenever a prophet tried to take a step, showed courage in a matter or attempted to guide and reform people, mischief-mongers and miscreants tried to create hurdles in his way and defeat his whole enterprise. It may be kept in mind that whenever the Prophet (sws) would take a step to invite and call people to the religion of truth, Abū Lahab and Abū Jahal and their likes would follow him like a shadow to refute him.

Here the action taken by the Prophet to guide and reform his people is called تَمَنّٰى (to desire) and the effort put into it is called اُمْنِيَّةٌ (desire, courage). The reason that these words are used is to highlight the fact that the wish and desire of a prophet is to guide people to God and make them understand His revelations. In order to achieve this objective, he adopts all sorts of measures. However, devils always lie in ambush to hijack these efforts. As soon as they see a particular endeavour of the prophet succeeding they launch a propaganda against it. It may be kept in mind that the devils are at rest when they see that there is none to call people to the truth. However, as soon as they see that someone is raising this call, they sense danger for their future. It is then that they use all their guiles and lures to oppose it.

I have already explained the difference between a prophet (*nabī*) and a messenger (*rasūl*) under verse 49 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān. By mentioning both words here, the purpose is to express the fact that no prophet or messenger is secure from this trial. In fact, it is an established practice of God regarding His prophets and messengers.

The word الشَّيْطٰنُ here is used as a generic noun and refers to devils both among the jinn and men. In other words, both unite to defeat God's envoys.

The expression اَلْقَى الشَّيْطٰنُ فِيْٓ اُمْنِيَّتِهٖ refers to the fact that these devils create all sorts of impediments in the wishes and desires and in the plans and projects of a prophet and messenger; they raise objections, make accusations and indulge in mockery in order to obliterate the impact of the call of truth.

Consider next the sentence: فَيَنْسَخُ اللّٰهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطٰنُ ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ اللّٰهُ اٰيٰتِهٖ. The word نسخ means "to obliterate" and احکام means "to make someone persevere." The implication is that prophets and messengers face this trial in accordance with an established practice of God, and their benefit, as will presently be explained, is reaped by the believers. Ultimately, this conflict between truth and evil ends in victory for truth and utter decimation for evil.

The assurance sounded is further emphasized by the attributes of God mentioned at the end of the verse. If He makes the forces of good and evil come in conflict with one another and lets the devils create hurdle and mischief, then all this is governed by His knowledge and wisdom. For this reason, a prophet should fully trust God since

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whatever is going to happen will be based on His knowledge and wisdom and will ultimately be in favour of the truth.

This precise subject is discussed at other instances in the Qur'ān as well. Here are some examples:

وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيٰطِيْنَ الْاِنْسِ وَ الْجِنِّ يُوْحِيْ بَعْضُهُمْ اِلٰى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُوْرًا ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ رَبُّكَ مَا فَعَلُوْهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَ مَا يَفْتَرُوْنَ وَ لِتَصْغٰٓى اِلَيْهِ اَفْـِٕدَةُ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ وَ لِيَرْضَوْهُ وَ لِيَقْتَرِفُوْا مَا هُمْ مُّقْتَرِفُوْنَ. (٦: ١١٣- ١١٤)

And We have similarly made the devils among humans and the jinn to be the enemy of every prophet. In order to deceive one another, they keep inspiring falsehoods to one another. Had your Lord intended, they would never have been able to do this. And leave aside all their deception. God has given this opportunity so that it strengthens the faith of the believers and so that the hearts of those who deny the Hereafter are inclined towards it, and so that they are happy with it and earn whatever they intend to. (6:113-114)

These verses fully explain the verse of Sūrah al-Hajj under discussion. Readers may specially keep the words يُوْحِيْ بَعْضُهُمْ اِلٰى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُوْرًا in mind. It depicts precisely the same meaning as اَلْقَى الشَّيْطٰنُ فِيْٓ اُمْنِيَّتِهٖ of in the verse under discussion.

In Sūrah al-Furqān, it is stated:

وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا مِّنَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِرَبِّكَ هَادِيًا وَّ نَصِيْرًا وَ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْ لَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْاٰنُ جُمْلَةً وَّاحِدَةً ۚ كَذٰلِكَ ۚ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهٖ فُؤَادَكَ وَ رَتَّلْنٰهُ تَرْتِيْلًا وَ لَا يَاْتُوْنَكَ بِمَثَلٍ اِلَّا جِئْنٰكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَ اَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيْرًا. (٢٥: ٣١ – ٣٣)

And in this way, We have made enemies from the wrongdoers for every prophet, and rest assured that your Lord is sufficient for guidance and help. And these disbelievers object: "Why was this Qur'ān not revealed to him in a single instalment?" Thus have We done this so that We can strengthen your heart through this to bear this heavy burden and We have revealed it gradually in a thorough way. And whatever objection these people will raise, We shall let you know its correct answer and best interpretation. (25:31-33)

In afore-mentioned verses, an example of a satanic impediment is also mentioned: when a messenger of God presents the words of God before people, then in order to blame him, they raise the objection that if he is God's messenger why does he not present to them the whole of the Qur'ān; how can this be difficult for God? Their implication was that when he cannot do this, it only means that he himself is authoring

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it. He presents as much as he fabricates and wrongly ascribes it to God to create an impression.

I have explained this verse is detail to answer all questions and dispel all doubts that can arise about it. After this explanation, it is not needed to refute the narrative cited by our exegetes as an occasion of revelation for this verse. In the first place, as can be seen, it does not need any occasion for revelation; it is fully clear in its meaning and is in complete harmony with its preceding and succeeding verses. A further indiscretion in this regard is that this narrative is suspect both with regard to its content as well as its chain narration. It seems to be a mere fabrication by some un-Islamic elements. It was concocted to cast aspersions on the infallibility of prophets. Our exegetes – simpletons – are continuing to cite it in their books.

لِّيَجْعَلَ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطٰنُ فِتْنَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ وَّ الْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ لَفِيْ شِقَاقٍۭ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿۵۳﴾ وَّ لِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ اَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٖ فَتُخْبِتَ لَهٗ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهَادِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿۵۴﴾[53]

These verses explain the wisdom behind why the miscreants and the devils launch an all out offensive against the call of truth whenever it is sounded in this world.

The word فِتْنَة means "trial and test." Obviously, if evil elements are not given a chance to use their guiles against the proponents of the truth, the two cannot be made distinct. Given the opportunity, the advocates of falsehood align themselves with the forces of evil and the proponents of the truth continue to adhere to the truth in spite of all the conspiracies hatched by the proponents of falsehood.

"Ailment" refers to the ailment of hypocrisy and the expression "who are hard-hearted" refers to the extreme enemies among the Jews and the Idolaters who had united to launch a counter-attack against the call of truth. It is stated that God has given this respite to falsehood and evil so that it becomes a trial and test for the hypocrites and the miscreants. They can do whatever they like against the truth and fulfil all their desires.

The words وَاِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ لَفِيْ شِقَاقٍۭ بَعِيْدٍ express sorrow at these wretched people: they have strayed so far in their opposition to the truth that there is no possibility for their return. Concealed in these words also is an indication for the Prophet (sws) that he should now leave these people to themselves. They are facing the established practice of God.

Consider next the words: وَّ لِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ اَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٖ فَتُخْبِتَ لَهٗ قُلُوْبُهُمْ. The verbs وَّ لِيَعْلَمَ and فَيُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٖ are used in their complete meaning and the knowledge

53. This happens so that God makes these whisperings of Satan a means of trial for those who have an ailment in their hearts and who are hard-hearted. And indeed, these unjust people have gone very far in their hostility. And this also happens because those who have been given knowledge fully know that the truth is from your Lord. Thus, their faith should be strengthened on it and their hearts bow down before it. And God shall definitely show the straight path to those who have accepted faith.

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referred to in أُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ is the knowledge of the Qur'ān. Stated here is another underlying wisdom in evil being given respite: those have been given the knowledge of the Book become deeply acquainted with this knowledge. They fully get to know that this knowledge that they have acquired from the Prophet (sws) is the absolute truth and is from God. Moreover, this soundness of their knowledge also strengthens their faith and their hearts submit to God with full devotion and trust.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that the essence of a thing becomes evident from its opposite. If a person knows and believes in something but is not aware of what can be said in its criticism, then there is a chance that when he becomes aware of it, his belief in it is shaken and jolted. However, if this critique has come before people and they have still stuck to their belief by evaluating the criticism, then they have accepted a truth on the basis of their own insight. Then there is little chance that some adverse current may make them give up their stance. It is to create this insight in religion that God gives respite to evil in this world: the adversaries of the truth are afforded the opportunity to spill their venom against it so that those who accept it, do not blindly accept it; they accept it with full comprehension.

Obviously, those who have such depth in knowledge will never have blind faith too – which dwindles at every gust of wind. In fact, true and deep knowledge produces true and deep faith. With such faith is engendered the submission to God that is its essence and without which faith has no weight in the scales of God.

Just as it is said that the hypocrites and the miscreants have strayed so far that there is no chance of their returning to the truth, the last part of the verse gives glad tidings to the believers that the devils will try their best to lead them astray but the Almighty will not let their faith go waste. He will give them the urge to be guided to the straight path that leads him to his Lord. The words صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ are undefined to express the importance and splendour of this path.

وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فِيْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ حَتّٰى تَاْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً اَوْ يَاْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمٍ عَقِيْمٍ ﴿۵۵﴾ اَلْمُلْكُ يَوْمَىِٕذٍ لِّلّٰهِ ؕ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فِيْ جَنّٰتِ النَّعِيْمِ ﴿۵۶﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ﴿۵۷﴾ [54]

Earlier, while praising the believers, it was stated that opposition of the enemies make the believers even more strongly believe that the warnings sounded by the Prophet (sws) are absolutely true. Stated now is what will happen when the promised doom they doubted arrives. The word عَقِيْم means "impotent and infertile." Thus in

54. And these people who have denied, will continue to remain in doubt about this knowledge until when suddenly the Hour of Judgement hovers over their heads or the torment of a baleful day descends on them. On that day, God will have the sole authority. It is He Who will decide between them. So, those who would have accepted faith and would have also done righteous deeds shall be in orchards of delight and those who disbelieved and rejected Our revelations, then it is for them that there is a humiliating torment.

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verse 29 of Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt, it is said قَالَتْ عَجُوْزٌ عَقِيْمٌ (she said: I am barren). From here, the meaning of being harmful and sinister was incorporated in it and it was also used for the stormy wind which will cause a horrific calamity and have no element of benefit in it. Hence the punishment that visited the people of the ‘Ād is expressed thus in verse 41of Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt: وَفِي عَادٍ اِذْ اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّيحَ الْعَقِيْمَ (and there is a great lesson for them in the nation of ‘Ād too when we sent them a baleful wind). In verse 19 of Sūrah al-Qamar the expression يَوْمِ نَحْسٍ is used in precisely the same meaning.

The words اَلْمُلْكُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلّٰهِ ۭ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ refer to the fact that if these people are only waiting for the Day of Judgment, then they should remember that on the day all authority would rest with God. On that day, neither will their factions and groups be of benefit to them nor their alleged deities and intercessors. It will be a day of verdicts and there will be chance for people to do any deeds to earn reward. God will deliver the verdict and pronounce the victor and the vanquished and everyone will face the consequences of his deeds.

The last part of the verse is the declaration of the verdict itself. The evil doers will face a humiliating torment because they regarded themselves to be above and beyond the teachings of God’s messengers which is the worst form of arrogance. Owing to this arrogance, they are worthy of not only being punished but punished in a disgraceful way. It may be kept in mind that a punishment that is accompanied with humiliation increases its affect ten fold.

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Section VI: Verses (58-76)

In these verses, Muslims are first affectionately consoled. They are the ones who, in order to save their faith, were migrating to various regions as a result of the wave of persecution let lose by the enemies of the truth. By referring to His own attributes, God has assured them that all this matter is in the hands of God; He sees and hears everything. Just as a dead piece of earth is revived through rain and becomes brimming with life, in a similar way, the rain of mercy will drench them and they will be overcome with jubilation. The reason God is giving their enemies respite is that He is very merciful to His servants. He is not hasty in punishing people. However, His respite has a limit. If they do not duly value it, they will see its fate.

After this, the Prophet (sws) is addressed and told that his enemies will continue to adhere to their ill-ways; he should consign their matter to God and ignore them. Soon the day will come when God decides their fate. When it comes, their deities – against whom they were not prepared to hear a single word – will not be of any avail to them. If they are angered at this, then let it be; the Prophet (sws) should clearly communicate to them that all their deities combined do not even have the power to create a fly, and cannot even recover a thing a fly snatches away from them. The

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Prophet (sws) is also asked to make these foolish people understand that neither are the angels God's daughters nor His partners; They are His servants. From among them, God selects His envoys just as He does so from among human beings. These people should be further told that they are always under God's control. It is only He Who is the fountainhead and decider of all affairs.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this discussion.

Text and Translation

وَالَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ قُتِلُوْٓا اَوْ مَاتُوْا لَيَرْزُقَنَّهُمُ اللّٰهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا ۭ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ ﴿۵۸﴾
لَيُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ مُّدْخَلًا يَّرْضَوْنَهٗ ۭ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَلِيْمٌ حَلِيْمٌ ﴿۵۹﴾ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَنْ عَاقَبَ بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوْقِبَ بِهٖ ثُمَّ بُغِيَ
عَلَيْهِ لَيَنْصُرَنَّهُ اللّٰهُ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَفُوٌّ غَفُوْرٌ ﴿۶۰﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُوْلِجُ الَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي الَّيْلِ وَ
اَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿۶۱﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَاَنَّ مَا يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ هُوَ الْبَاطِلُ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ
الْكَبِيْرُ ﴿۶۲﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاۗءِ مَاۗءً ۡ فَتُصْبِحُ الْاَرْضُ مُخْضَرَّةً ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَطِيْفٌ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿۶۳﴾ لَهٗ
مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۭ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ ﴿۶۴﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَالْفُلْكَ
تَجْرِيْ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِاَمْرِهٖ ۭ وَيُمْسِكُ السَّمَاۗءَ اَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَي الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِهٖ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۶۵﴾ وَ
هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَحْيَاكُمْ ۡ ثُمَّ يُمِيْتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيْكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لَكَفُوْرٌ ﴿۶۶﴾ لِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا هُمْ نَاسِكُوْهُ فَلَا
يُنَازِعُنَّكَ فِي الْاَمْرِ وَادْعُ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ ۭ اِنَّكَ لَعَلٰى هُدًى مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿۶۷﴾ وَاِنْ جٰدَلُوْكَ فَقُلِ اللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۶۸﴾
اَللّٰهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيْمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿۶۹﴾ اَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاۗءِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ اِنَّ
ذٰلِكَ فِيْ كِتٰبٍ ۭ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ عَلَي اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرٌ ﴿۷۰﴾ وَيَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهٖ سُلْطٰنًا وَّمَا لَيْسَ لَهُمْ بِهٖ
عِلْمٌ ۭ وَمَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ نَّصِيْرٍ ﴿۷۱﴾ وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ تَعْرِفُ فِيْ وُجُوْهِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا الْمُنْكَرَ ۭ
يَكَادُوْنَ يَسْطُوْنَ بِالَّذِيْنَ يَتْلُوْنَ عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِنَا ۭ قُلْ اَفَاُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِشَرٍّ مِّنْ ذٰلِكُمْ ۭ اَلنَّارُ ۭ وَعَدَهَا اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ۭ
وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۷۲﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٌ فَاسْتَمِعُوْا لَهٗ ۭ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ لَنْ يَّخْلُقُوْا ذُبَابًا وَّ
لَوِ اجْتَمَعُوْا لَهٗ ۭ وَاِنْ يَّسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْـــًٔا لَّا يَسْتَنْقِذُوْهُ مِنْهُ ۭ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوْبُ ﴿۷۳﴾ مَا قَدَرُوا اللّٰهَ
حَقَّ قَدْرِهٖ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ ﴿۷۴﴾ اَللّٰهُ يَصْطَفِيْ مِنَ الْمَلٰۗىِٕكَةِ رُسُلًا وَّمِنَ النَّاسِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿۷۵﴾
يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۭ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ ﴿۷۶﴾

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And the people who migrated in the way of God, then were killed or died a natural death, God shall bless them with a good sustenance. And indeed it is God Who provides the best sustenance. He shall admit them to a place with which they shall be pleased and satisfied. And God is indeed knowledgeable and gracious. (58-59)

Hear this thing and moreover he who took revenge equal to what afflicted him, then he is subjected to oppression, God shall definitely help him. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Merciful. (60)

This will happen because it is God Who makes the night enter the day and the day enter the night and God hears all and sees all. This will also happen also because God is the real deity and those which they invoke besides God are all false. And indeed God alone is the Supreme, the Greatest. (61-62)

Do you not see that it is God Who sends down water from the heavens; then, through it, the earth becomes lush green? Indeed, God is very discerning, well-aware. In His control is whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And only God is self-sufficient and worthy of praise. (63-64)

Do you not see that God has put the things of the earth to your service and the ship also? It sails in the sea at His bidding. And He is holding the sky lest it should fall down on the earth, except at His directive. Indeed, God is very gracious to people and very merciful. And it is He Who has given life to you. Then He gives death to you; then He shall bring you back to life. Indeed, a human being is very ungrateful. (65-66)

And We have prescribed a path for each community; so they will tread on it alone. Then they must not be able to dispute with you in any way in this matter. And keep calling towards your Lord. Indeed, it is you who is on the straight path. And if they argue with you, tell them: God very well knows what you are doing. God will decide between you on the Day of Judgement in what you are differing. Do you not know that whatever is in the heavens and the earth is in God's knowledge? All these things are written in a register. Indeed, this is very easy for God. (67-70)

And they worship besides God those things about which God has revealed no sanction and nor do they have any knowledge about them. And no one will be the helper of these unjust people. And when Our clear revelations are recited before them, you see revulsion on the faces of these disbelievers. It is as if they will attack those who are reciting Our revelations to them. Tell them: Should I inform you of a thing of greater revulsion than this? It is Hell! God has promised it to these people who have disbelieved and what an evil abode it is! (71-72)

People, an example is cited: So, listen to it attentively. Those who you invoke besides God cannot even create a fly in spite of all of them trying to. And if a fly snatches something from them, they cannot even protect it. Those who desire and that what they desire are both frail. They have not recognized the importance of God the way it should be. Indeed, God is powerful, dominant upon all. (73-74)

God selects His messengers from the angels the way He does from human beings.

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Indeed, God hears and sees all. He knows what is behind and before them, and all matters turn to Him only. (75-76)

Explanation

وَالَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ قُتِلُوْٓا اَوْ مَاتُوْا لَيَرْزُقَنَّهُمُ اللّٰهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا ۭ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ ۝۵۸[55]

This verse is connected to the glad tidings given earlier gives further glad tidings to those oppressed Muslims who were forced to migrate from Makkah to protect their faith as a result of a wave of persecution lest lose by the disbelievers of the Quraysh.

It has been mentioned in verse 169 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān that those who die for the cause of God are alive and receive sustenance from Him in the life of Barzakh (بَلْ اَحْيَاۗءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُوْنَ). The same glad tidings are given here to people who migrate from their homes and die on the way though they are not killed. In other words, not merely being killed for this cause is martyrdom, even a natural death also has the same status. The word رِزْق comprehensively signifies all the favours and blessings of God and should not be confined in its meaning. When it is said that God provides the best sustenance, who can even imagine what He will provide those who left their homes and all they had for His cause?

لَيُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ مُّدْخَلًا يَّرْضَوْنَهٗ ۭ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَلِيْمٌ حَلِيْمٌ ۝۵۹[56]

The word يَّرْضَوْنَهٗ encompasses a whole world of meaning. In other words, a person who leaves his home for the cause of God and dies during this migration, he should rest assured that he will be admitted into a place where not only all his hopes will be fulfilled but he will also be given so much more that he cannot even imagine in this world.

The attributes of God mentioned imply that such people should rest assured that whatever they are going through at the hands of the enemies of the truth is in God’s knowledge. However, since besides being knowledgeable, He is also gracious, He does not immediately seize His enemies. In fact, He gives them full opportunity to mend their ways. But these people must remember that one day this respite will end and they will be brought to justice.

ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَنْ عَاقَبَ بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوْقِبَ بِهٖ ثُمَّ بُغِيَ عَلَيْهِ لَيَنْصُرَنَّهُ اللّٰهُ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَفُوٌّ غَفُوْرٌ ۝۶۰[57]

The word ذٰلِكَ is the substitute of a whole sentence, as has been explained under

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55. And the people who migrated in the way of God, then were killed or died a natural death, God shall bless them with a good sustenance. And indeed it is God Who provides the best sustenance.

56. He shall admit them to a place with which they shall be pleased and satisfied. And God is indeed knowledgeable and gracious.

57. Hear this thing and moreover he who took revenge equal to what afflicted him, then he is subjected to oppression, God shall definitely help him. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Merciful.

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verse 30 earlier. The implication is that what has been said is not something perfunctory in nature. It is a profound reality. Friends and foes alike must fully hear this. Moreover, it is now declared that if the oppressed Muslims retaliate on equal footing to defend their life and wealth, they have this permission. And, if after this, they are further harassed, then their enemies must remember that God is surely going to help them.

In the expression وَمَنْ عَاقَبَ بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوْقِبَ بِهٖ, is used in deference to *mujānasah* as in دِنَّاهُمْ كَمَا دَانُوْا and جَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا. The words ثُمَّ بُغِيَ عَلَيْهِ show that if because of some defensive measure adopted by the Muslims, the disbelievers commit a further excess against them to dampen their courage so that in future they do no dare take a step to defend their persons and honour, then these disbelievers must remember and the believers must rest assured that God shall never let his happen. He shall definitely come to the rescue of His servants. The word "definitely" conceals a whole world of meaning borne testimony to by later incidents and by history. It may be kept in mind that these glad tidings were given to the Muslims at the time of migration. Later when they became a force in Madīnah, these same words were stated very clearly. Readers may look up what is written under verses 39-40.

The sentence "indeed, God is Forgiving, Merciful" has a special import here. Since these glad tiding were given right at the time of migration, there was a chance that the oppressed Muslims might take a hasty step in retaliation, whereas the appropriate time for this had not arrived as yet. For this reason, the Almighty has reminded them of His attributes of forgiveness and mercy. Even though Muslims have the right to protect their life, wealth and honour, however just as God Himself shows mercy to people in spite of their excesses, in a similar way Muslims too must exhibit this attitude to some extent. The time to nab these rebellious people is at hand. In other words, the implication is that God wants to see a reflection of His attributes in the Muslims.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُوْلِجُ الَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي الَّيْلِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿٦١﴾[58]

Stated in this verse is the argument in favour of the promise of divine help mentioned earlier. These foolish people wrongly think that God does not have any role in the affairs of this universe. He in fact controls everything. It is He Who enters the day into the night and vice versa and He is also one who hears and sees all. In other words He is not deaf and blind so that He is unaware of the mischief caused by the wrongdoers. Thus when He is the actual controller and also sees and hears all, how can He remain detached from the governance of this universe? It is essential that He help those who want to reform this world against those who are creating disorder in it. How can this be difficult for Him at all when He is able to admit the night into the day

58. This will happen because it is God Who makes the night enter the day and the day enter the night and God hears all and sees all.

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and the day into the night – something which everyone is observing through his eyes. Without any bother, He can surely obliterate the darkness of disbelief and make the world shine with the radiance of faith.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَاَنَّ مَا يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ هُوَ الْبَاطِلُ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيْرُ ﴿٦٢﴾[59]

Stated in this verse is the second argument: no one should remain under the misconception that these enemies too have someone to help them. It is only God Who has full control of this universe. All those whom these people invoke besides Him are baseless and a mere deception; in fact, they are their own fabrications. God is exalted and mighty. How can these stones and idols be equated with Him? The foolish who worship them as deities are totally unaware of His majesty.

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۫ فَتُصْبِحُ الْاَرْضُ مُخْضَرَّةً ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَطِيْفٌ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿٦٣﴾[60]

The words اَلَمْ تَرَ are meant to address each and every individual of a group separately. In the previous verses, the Almighty has substantiated His promise of help through His attributes. In this verse, the testimony of the world around human beings is also added to His attributes. The implication is that keeping in view the current adverse circumstances no one should think that God's help is improbable. Not every one can understand how God's mercy will manifest itself and when it will do so. People see how a land has become dry and desolate with no signs of plant life in it nor any chance of rain. However, when God wants, His winds bring forth clusters upon clusters of clouds. Then within the blink of any eye the land becomes drenched with water and becomes lush green. In a similar way, whenever God wants He will send clouds of help to His people even if the apparent circumstances are not conducive.

The attributes of God mentioned at the end of the verse have a very subtle implication. God is very discerning (لَطِيْفٌ), He makes His plans materialize in a way that no one has any inkling of them. Since He is well-aware (خَبِيْرٌ), He has knowledge of the past as well as the future, whereas people only have knowledge of the apparent.

لَهٗ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ ﴿٦٤﴾[61]

This verse reinforces what is said earlier: everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him and is under His control. Hence who can impede His intentions from

59. This will also happen also because God is the real deity and those which they invoke besides God are all false. And indeed God alone is the Supreme, the Greatest.

60. Do you not see that it is God Who sends down water from the heavens; then, through it, the earth becomes lush green? Indeed, God is very discerning, well-aware.

61. In His control is whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And only God is self-sufficient and worthy of praise.

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materializing? The attribute الْحَمِيْدُ (worthy of praise) is meant to qualify the attribute الْغَنِيُّ (self-sufficient). The reason was dispel any hopelessness in people because of God being self-sufficient; they should hope that in spite of being self-sufficient, He is benevolent to His people. In spite of being aloof, He is with everyone.

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَالْفُلْكَ تَجْرِيْ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِاَمْرِهٖ ۭ وَيُمْسِكُ السَّمَاۗءَ اَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَي الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِهٖ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٦٥﴾[62]

The implication of this verse is that the respite given to human beings in this world is God's favour and blessing. Everything of the heavens and earth is serving them – without which they cannot survive – at God's behest. All things will rebel against human beings and become their enemies were it not so for God's directive. As an example, the sailing of the ship in the sea is cited. It does so because God has put it in their service; otherwise, it would drown in the blink of any eye. Similar is the case of the sky. Had God not held it, it would have fallen down upon them. An annexing noun to the effect مخافة (lest) is suppressed before اَنْ.

The last part of the verse اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ implies that all these phenomena bear witness that whatever human beings have in this world is not because of their own knowledge and scientific advancements. It is purely due to God's mercy and favour. If the Almighty just displaces a single building block of this universe, the whole of its edifice will be razed to ground.

The tone of this verse is worthy of note: the threat it harbours for the rebellious elements of the Quraysh is evident from every word. The implication is that they should not hastily demand their punishment. If God is delaying it, it is not because of any difficulty He is facing; on the contrary, it is because of His mercy and favour so that they are able to benefit from this and mend their ways.

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَحْيَاكُمْ ۡ ثُمَّ يُمِيْتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيْكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لَكَفُوْرٌ ﴿٦٦﴾[63]

This verse reminds them of the hereafter: if they do not face any torment in this world, how can they rest at peace; they still have to face the consequences of their deeds in the hereafter. Everyone has to return to God one day. It is He who has given life and it is He who gives death and then again He will give life. When creating the first time was not difficult for Him, how can it pose a difficulty the second time? The last part of the verse "indeed, a human being is very ungrateful" mentions the real reason for their

62. Do you not see that God has put the things of the earth to your service and the ship also? It sails in the sea at His bidding. And He is holding the sky lest it should fall down on the earth, except at His directive. Indeed, God is very gracious to people and very merciful.

63. And it is He Who has given life to you. Then He gives death to you; then He shall bring you back to life. Indeed, a human being is very ungrateful.

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rebelliousness: as far as the message of the Prophet (sws) and the Qur'ān is concerned, it is totally clear and there cannot be any two opinions about it. It is these people who are very ungrateful. The word "human being" here refers to these rebellious opponents; however, to express aversion, they are not directly addressed; instead a general word is used. This style also encompasses regret and sorrow at their behaviour.

لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا هُمْ نَاسِكُوهُ فَلَا يُنَازِعُنَّكَ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَادْعُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ ۖ إِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ هُدًى مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٦٧﴾[64]

The word مَنْسَك has been discussed under verse 34. Here it is used for ways of worship, the apparent form of divine law and its principles.

Earlier in this *sūrah*, it has been said that in that period the Jews and the Christians were openly siding with the Quraysh. In fact, it was they who were actually fuelling the whole debate. For this reason, the verse refers to them and says that God has prescribed a law for each community. The purpose of saying this was that they should worship God according to His law and when He makes a change in this law, they should whole heartedly accept it. This would make those who are sincere distinct from the rest. Thus in the time of each messenger, changes have been made in the outward form of the *sharī'ah* and the innovations fabricated by the innovators have also been reformed. Those who were seekers of the truth, accepted this reform with full sincerity. However, the single-track minded and slaves to traditions remained adamant on their view. Out of their bias for them, they began debating those who argued against these cherished traditions of theirs. The verse states that similar is the situation of the Prophet's opponents: due to their stagnation and prejudice for their *jāhiliyyah* customs, they are not prepared to give up the path they are treading. Therefore, the Prophet (sws) should no longer show concern for them. The words فَلَا يُنَازِعُنَّكَ فِي الْأَمْرِ imply that he should not give them any opportunity to engage in polemical debates with him. He should adhere to the straight path of his Lord and also invite them towards it. If they accept his call, it is fine; otherwise, he should leave them to themselves. Indeed, he is treading on the straight path. What harm can such a person incur from those who are treading the wrong path? With a little change of words, this subject has been brought up at other instances in the Qur'ān. Here are a few examples.

At the end of the discussion on the *qiblāh* in Sūrah al-Baqarah, it is said:

وَلِكُلٍّ وِّجْهَةٌ هُوَ مُوَلِّيْهَا فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرٰتِ (٢: ١٤٨)

And for each there is a fixed a direction towards which it turns. So, excel in the direction of virtues. (2:148)

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64. And We have prescribed a path for each community; so they will tread on it alone. Then they must not be able to dispute with you in any way in this matter. And keep calling towards your Lord. Indeed, it is you who is on the straight path.

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In Sūrah al-Mā'idah, it is stated:

لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَّ مِنْهَاجًا ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّ لٰكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِيْ مَآ اٰتٰىكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرٰتِ (٥: ٤٨)

For each of you, We have ordained a rule and path. And had God pleased, He could have made you one community, but He wanted to try you by whatever He has blessed you with. So, try to outdo one another in good deeds. (5:48)

Readers may look up the explanation of these verses. I have tried to fully elaborate under them that these verses do not portray any tolerance for the Jews and Christians, as some people have understood. They actually express and declare aversion against them.

وَاِنْ جٰدَلُوْكَ فَقُلِ اللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ اَللّٰهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيْمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾[65]

The Prophet (sws) is advised here not to give others a chance to engage in polemical debate with him. However, in spite of this attitude of his, if they take the initiative in this regard, then he should try to ward them off by saying that God will decide between them on the Day of Judgement. He is fully aware of what these disbelievers are doing. In other words, the Prophet (sws) should ignore them and consign their matter to God. They are intentionally playing pranks and are not ones who can be persuaded through reasoning.

اَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ فِيْ كِتٰبٍ ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرٌ ﴿٧٠﴾[66]

Though this verse addresses the Prophet (sws), however the rebuke found in every word of it is directed at his adversaries. When God is so well-informed that He knows that is in the heavens and the earth, the Prophet (sws) should consign their matter to Him. He will deal with them. The words "all these things are written in a register" augment the threat already sounded. Their implication is that no one should think that all these are baseless warnings; everyone should know that God has a written record of every person's deeds. It has been intricately compiled. Moreover, no one should think that who can preserve the details of every person in such a minute way. This might be a tall order for everyone but, as the last part of the verse says, this is

65. And if they argue with you, tell them: God very well knows what you are doing. God will decide between you on the Day of Judgement in what you are differing.

66. Do you not know that whatever is in the heavens and the earth is in God's knowledge? All these things are written in a register. Indeed, this is very easy for God.

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something very easy for God.

وَيَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهٖ سُلْطٰنًا وَّمَا لَيْسَ لَهُمْ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ ؕ وَمَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ نَّصِيْرٍ ﴿۷۱﴾[67]

This verse clears another misconception. The day God will deliver His verdict with justice none will be able to help the unjust. The deities and intercessors they associate with God are baseless. Neither has God sanctioned them nor do they have any knowledge regarding this matter. If someone associates someone with God without His permission, then this is tantamount to fabricating a lie against God, which is an act of greatest injustice. Regarding someone to be a deity without any logical or natural argument to support this claim is like following conjecture and conjecture can never replace knowledge and the truth.

وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ تَعْرِفُ فِيْ وُجُوْهِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا الْمُنْكَرَ ؕ يَكَادُوْنَ يَسْطُوْنَ بِالَّذِيْنَ يَتْلُوْنَ عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِنَا ؕ قُلْ اَفَاُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِشَرٍّ مِّنْ ذٰلِكُمْ ؕ اَلنَّارُ ؕ وَعَدَهَا اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۷۲﴾[68]

The verb يَسْطُوْنَ means "to attack someone."

The implication is that though they do not have any reasoning in favour of their deities but in spite of this such is their bias against monotheism that when they are presented with lucid arguments in its favour, they writhe in frenzy and their faces convulse in anger and it looks as if they will attack those who recite these revelations before them. It is stated that if these people are so infuriated at them, they should be informed by the Prophet (sws) of a thing that will distort their faces even more and they shall necessarily face it: the fire of Hell and it is a very evil abode.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٌ فَاسْتَمِعُوْا لَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ لَنْ يَّخْلُقُوْا ذُبَابًا وَّلَوِ اجْتَمَعُوْا لَهٗ ؕ وَاِنْ يَّسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْـًٔا لَّا يَسْتَنْقِذُوْهُ مِنْهُ ؕ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوْبُ ﴿۷۳﴾[69]

This verse depicts the baselessness of their deities with a powerful example.

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67. And they worship besides God those things about which God has revealed no sanction and nor do they have any knowledge about them. And no one will be the helper of these unjust people.

68. And they worship besides God those things about which God has And when Our clear revelations are recited before them, you see revulsion on the faces of these disbelievers. It is as if they will attack those who are reciting Our revelations to them. Tell them: Should I inform you of a thing of greater revulsion than this? It is Hell! God has promised it to these people who have disbelieved and what an evil abode it is!

69. People, an example is cited: So, listen to it attentively. Those who you invoke besides God cannot even create a fly in spite of all of them trying to. And if a fly snatches something from them, they cannot even protect it. Those who desire and that what they desire are both frail.

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The last sentence "those who desire and that what they desire are both frail" subtly refers to the fact that if a person regards someone to be a deity, it is because this is a remedy to his own frailty. However, these foolish people have set up deities which are more helpless than these people themselves. They seek help from the helpless.

مَا قَدَرُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَقَوِیٌّ عَزِیْزٌ ﴿۷۴﴾[70]

The verse implies that these people have not given due importance to God's majesty and might. He is not someone helpless like their deities. On the contrary, He is very powerful and dominant. He is fully capable of implementing His intentions and no one can dare impede them.

اَللّٰهُ یَصْطَفِیْ مِنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَّ مِنَ النَّاسِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِیْعٌۢ بَصِیْرٌ ﴿۷۵﴾[71]

The verse implies that it is sheer naivety of these people that they have started to worship angels considering them to be daughters of God. Angels are not His daughters or partners. They are in fact His servants. Their only status is that some special ones among them are selected as His envoys and sent to His messengers.

The attributes of God mentioned at the end simultaneously refer to two important realities. Firstly, since God hears and sees all, what need does He have to make anyone His partner? Secondly, when God has these attributes, He is also watching over the obligations of the angels – they dare not exceed the prescribed bounds in the slightest way.

یَعْلَمُ مَا بَیْنَ اَیْدِیْهِمْ وَ مَا خَلْفَهُمْ ؕ وَ اِلَی اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ ﴿۷۶﴾[72]

Whatever is behind and after these angels is in God's knowledge. For this reason, they can neither increase God's knowledge in any way nor can any of their words and deeds escape God's eyes. They are not in a position to claim a piece of knowledge that God does not have. All matters are presented before God. They are neither presented before the angels nor will they ever be. On the contrary, reports of the tasks assigned to these angels are presented before God.

Section VII Verses (77-78)

These are the concluding verses of the *sūrah.* In the previous verses, the disbelievers

70. They have not recognized the importance of God the way it should be. Indeed, God is powerful, dominant upon all.

71. God selects His messengers from the angels the way He does from human beings. Indeed, God hears and sees all.

72. He knows what is behind and before them, and all matters turn to Him only.

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of the Quraysh were proven as traitors and deceivers and thereby unworthy of being the custodians of the House of God and heirs to Abraham's legacy. At the same time, it was indicated that the real worthy custodians of this House of God are the Muslims who had been expelled from there. They had also been given the authority to wage *jihād* to liberate the House of God from their occupation and cleanse it from filth. Now, in these verses, Muslims are being guided to directives that are essential to fulfil the requisites of this great responsibility.

Text and Translation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا ارْكَعُوْا وَاسْجُدُوْا وَاعْبُدُوْا رَبَّكُمْ وَافْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۷۷﴾ وَجَاهِدُوْا فِي اللّٰهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهٖ ؕ هُوَ اجْتَبٰىكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّيْنِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ ؕ مِلَّةَ اَبِيْكُمْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ؕ هُوَ سَمّٰىكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ۙ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِيْ هٰذَا لِيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ شَهِيْدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ ۚ فَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ ؕ هُوَ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ۚ فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيْرُ ﴿۷۸﴾

Believers! Keep kneeling and prostrating before your Lord and worshipping Him and do righteous deeds that you may succeed. And strive in the way of God in the most befitting way. It is He Who has selected you and not placed any constraint on you regarding religion. He has chosen the community of your father – Abraham – for you. It was he who had earlier named you Muslim and in this Qur'ān also your name is Muslim so that the messenger bears witness to God's religion before you and you bear witness to it before other people. So, be diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh* and hold strongly to God. He only is your guardian. So, what a good guardian and what a good helper! (77-78)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا ارْكَعُوْا وَاسْجُدُوْا وَاعْبُدُوْا رَبَّكُمْ وَافْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۷۷﴾[73]

Earlier, as has been indicated, the requisites of the position of leadership were being stated, glad tidings of which are mentioned in this *sūrah*. This position is a great privilege and also a great responsibility. For this reason, kneeling and prostrating were mentioned the foremost. They actually signify the prayer. However, as pointed out under verse 112 of Sūrah Tawbah, when a prayer is mentioned in this way, the purpose is to also refer to attention and focus during the prayer. Also specially alluded to is the *tahajjud* prayer adhering to which is essential to become worthy of great responsibilities. Since, as just indicated, this is an occasion of both of privilege and

73. Believers! Keep kneeling and prostrating before your Lord and worshipping Him and do righteous deeds that you may succeed.

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responsibility, expressing gratitude and becoming worthy of the responsibility were other reasons for urging Muslims to show diligence in the prayer. Readers are advised to look up verse 41 of this *sūrah* in which Muslims are informed of the responsibilities of the custodianship of the Ḥaram and what does their Lord expect of them after entrusting them with this position of leadership.

The words وَاعْبُدُوْا رَبَّكُمْ (keep worshipping Him) mention the specific after the general. Worship also encompasses obedience. In other words, what is required is worshipping and showing obedience to Him in all spheres of life.

The words وَ افْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ (and do righteous deeds) are even more general. The implication is that they should do more virtuous deeds. These deeds refer to ones which are not obligatory but are highly recommended and rewarding as a result. They have a great role in shaping the character of a person.

The last part لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ (that you may succeed) implies that if Muslims are diligent in doing all these deeds, they will become capable enough to be given the position of authority in the land that they are being promised. This will also make them worthy of success in the hereafter.

وَ جَاهِدُوْا فِي اللّٰهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهٖ ؕ هُوَ اجْتَبٰىكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّيْنِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ ؕ مِلَّةَ اَبِيْكُمْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ؕ هُوَ سَمّٰىكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ۙ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِيْ هٰذَا لِيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ شَهِيْدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ ۚ فَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ ؕ هُوَ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ۚ فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيْرُ ﴿۷۸﴾[74]

The verse begins with directing Muslims to strive for the cause of God with their lives and their resources. This is in tandem to the preparation they were earlier required to make regarding their conduct. Here the word *jihād* does not refer to war for that is dependent on certain conditions. It has already been mentioned in verse 38-41 earlier. Here it refers to striving for the cause of God through all possible means a person can muster for the purpose of making His word superior.

The expression فِي اللّٰهِ is actually فِي سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ. The words "in the most befitting way" refer to the fact that this striving should not be half-hearted. It should be done in such a way that if it costs a person his life, he should be prepared for it.

The God Who is asking them to strive in this way is the one Who has chosen them for the responsibility of delivering His final message to mankind. This selection has been made by Him after relieving others whether they are the Quraysh or the Jews

74. And strive in the way of God in the most befitting way. It is He Who has selected you and not placed any constraint on you regarding religion. He has chosen the community of your father – Abraham – for you. It was he who had earlier named you Muslim and in this Qur'ān also your name is Muslim so that the messenger bears witness to God's religion before you and you bear witness to it before other people. So, be diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh* and hold strongly to God. He only is your guardian. So, what a good guardian and what a good helper!

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from this position. Hence they should rise to the occasion and do full justice to their selection of leading other nations of the world. Their determination and resolve should be exemplary. They are further told that there are no constraints in this religion for them the way they existed in the religion followed by the Jews. God out of His favour has protected this religion – which is based on human nature – from all such constraints and restrictions. The implication is that even though this is a heavy burden, but they are capable of lifting it.

This religion is the legacy of Abraham (sws) their forefather and whose legacy can be more cherished than his. It should be kept in mind that here the real addressees are the Ishmaelites who were not only the progeny of Abraham (sws), they were also very proud of this lineage.

A verb to effect وَاتَّبِعُوْا can be regarded to be suppressed before مِلَّةَ اَبِيْكُمْ or the verb اجْتَبٰىكُمْ can be regarded to encompass the meaning of another verb that suits the occasion. I prefer the latter construction in light of verse 2 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah (رَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْاِسْلَامَ دِيْناً).

The words "it was he who had earlier named you Muslim and in this Qur'ān also" indicate that this religion is the community of Abraham (sws). It was he who named them Muslims and then this same name was given to them in this final religion. Some scholars regard the antecedent of the pronoun هُوَ to be God. However, in my opinion, it refers to the prayer of Abraham (sws) mentioned in verse 129 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِنَآ اُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ (Our Lord! And make us obedient to you and institute from our progeny a Muslim nation). The purpose of referring to this name in this supplication is to encourage Muslims by informing them that they are the manifestation of their father's prayer. Thus they should always keep this historical fact in mind.

It should not be misconstrued from the verse that the word Islam or Muslim was used by Abraham (sws) for the first time. Islam is the nature of all objects of this universe, as is indicated in verse 82 of Sūrah Āl 'Imrān. All prophets have always followed Islam. The only thing is that Abraham (sws) had prayed that a community emerge from the progeny of Ishmael and named it Muslim. Thus when this community emerged, God gave it the same name.

What is discussed in لِيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ شَهِيْدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَ تَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ (so that the messenger bears witness to God's religion before you and you bear witness to it before other people) has also been mentioned in verse 142 of Sūrah al-Baqarah thus: وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ اُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِّتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيْدًا (and similarly, We have made you an intermediate community so that you be witnesses to God's religion before people, and the messenger be such a witness before you). The part of the verse under discussion refers to the purpose of selection: God has selected them after removing others from this position so that just as His messenger bears witness to His religion before them, they should bear witness to it before mankind until the Day of Judement. The nature

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of bearing this witness has been discussed under verse 143 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

Verse 77 began with the mention of the prayer and the reason for this was indicated there. The *sūrah* now ends emphasizing the prayer and *zakāh* with the words: "so, be diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh* and hold strongly to God. He only is your guardian; so, what a good guardian and what a good helper." Here the directive to be adhere to the prayer and pay *zakāh* is with reference to the responsibility of "bearing witness to God's religion before mankind" imposed on this community. On these two pillars stands the whole edifice of religion.[75] As long as people follow them, religion will be followed, and vice versa.

There is no difference in the expressions وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ and وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ. This is the remedy being suggested to the hardships that will be faced in this cause: they should adhere to their stance with full resolve and keep their Lord in remembrance and hold fast to His Book. Moreover, they should show full faith in His help because He is the best of Guardians and the best of Helpers.

With these words, the explanation of this *sūrah* comes to its completion. وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوٰنَآ اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and our last words are that all gratitude is for God, Lord of the worlds).

Raḥmānābād
6th July 1973

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75. For details, see: Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 197-199.

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Sūrah al-Mu’minūn

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous Sūrah

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of the previous one: Sūrah al-Ḥajj. It begins with the topic on which the last *sūrah* ended. The closing verses of Sūrah al-Ḥajj informed Muslims of their collective responsibility: just as God’s Messenger has borne witness to the religion of truth before them, it is now their duty to bear this witness before other people. At the same time, they were told to show diligence in the prayer, pay *zakāh* and trust God since these are essential for discharging this collective responsibility. This *sūrah* now begins with the same topic, as if it is a supplement of the previous *sūrah*. The last verse of Sūrah al-Ḥajj and the first one of this *sūrah* perfectly enmesh into one another.

There is also no principle difference in the topics of both *sūrahs*. Only the style and the manner of reasoning are different. In the previous *sūrah*, believers were informed of success and the disbelievers were told about the disgraceful fate that was awaiting them. In this *sūrah*, this topic has become very evident, especially the topic of giving glad tidings to the believers. Also the traits which make them worthy of these glad tidings are explained in detail. Similarly, it is fully explained to the disbelievers that the humiliation they are being informed of is destined to afflict them. This is evident from the testimony of history and from the signs found in the world around them and the one within them. However, since the Almighty has created this world as a test, the believers are made to go through a trial and the disbelievers are given respite. However, these periods are only temporary. Ultimately, the truth will triumph and evil will be routed.

Analysis of Meanings

Verses (1-11): Believers are given glad tidings of success and entry into Paradise. The conditions on which these glad tidings depend are also explained.

Verses (11-22): Resurrection in the hereafter is substantiated through the signs of God’s power and wisdom in the creation of human beings. The signs of God’s providence found in this universe show that reward and punishment are certain to take place.

Verses (23-50): A brief reference to the anecdotes of God’s prophets is given. By referring to Noah (sws) among the earlier prophets, Moses (sws), Aaron (sws) and Jesus (sws) among the later ones and without mentioning the names of the middle

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ones, it is pointed out to the Quraysh that way they are denying God's Messenger today is nothing new: miscreants have always denied messengers, but God routed them and made His messengers triumphant. This will happen now as well. However, this world is a place of trial. Hence the adherents to the truth shall necessarily be put through trial. As a requisite of this trial, the adherents to evil are given respite for a certain time so that they want to do whatever they want with full might. This will leave them with no excuse.

Verses (51-67): All prophets are given the same religion by God and call people to the same truth; however, their followers split this religion into bits and pieces and now each faction is engrossed in its own ways. The Prophet (sws) is assured that he should let these people remain indulged in their merriment for a while. They are under the misconception that the blessings they enjoy in the form of wealth and children are an enhancement of favour to them. In fact, this is going to precipitate their doom and they are not aware of this. People who have faith, humility and sincerity and are generous are in fact enhancing their favours. Indeed, they will get a rich reward of their virtues. These slaves to this world will continue to remain inebriated in their interests. Ultimately, when they will get caught, they will cry and wail, but this will be to no avail.

Verses (68-77): Certain objections of the rejecters are referred to and their demand for punishment is responded to: if even a sample of this punishment is shown to them, it will not be of any benefit to them. Just as they learn no lesson from the calamities faced by others, similarly as soon as they find relief from a calamity they will return to their evil ways.

Verses (78-92): Those who demand miracles and signs are asked to use their ears, eyes and heart: if they use these God-gifted faculties, they will think that resurrection and reward and punishment in the hereafter are obvious realities. After this, some aspects of their contradictory views are pointed out: they are running away from the obvious requisites of their established beliefs merely to fulfil their desires.

Verses (93-118): In this concluding section of the *sūrah*, the Prophet (sws) is asked to ignore the attitude of his opponents for a while and seek God's refuge from the imminent torment. The disbelievers are warned that soon they will regret and wish that they be given a chance do some good deeds by going back in the previous world. However, it would be too late by then. Only they will succeed at that time whose scales are heavy and only those servants of God will triumph who today are inviting them to His religion but the rejecters are making fun of them. Today they think that the life of this world has a long span but in the hereafter they will realize that it passed in a few seconds. They think that they will not be held accountable for their deeds and will not return to God. But this is bound to happen and none of their deities and intercessors will be of benefit to them.

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Section I: Verses (1-11)

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

قَدۡ اَفۡلَحَ الۡمُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۱﴾ الَّذِيۡنَ هُمۡ فِىۡ صَلَاتِهِمۡ خٰشِعُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۲﴾ وَالَّذِيۡنَ هُمۡ عَنِ اللَّغۡوِ مُعۡرِضُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۳﴾ وَالَّذِيۡنَ
هُمۡ لِلزَّكٰوةِ فٰعِلُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۴﴾ وَالَّذِيۡنَ هُمۡ لِفُرُوۡجِهِمۡ حٰفِظُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۵﴾ اِلَّا عَلٰٓى اَزۡوَاجِهِمۡ اَوۡ مَا مَلَكَتۡ اَيۡمَانُهُمۡ فَاِنَّهُمۡ غَيۡرُ
مَلُوۡمِيۡنَ ۚ﴿۶﴾ فَمَنِ ابۡتَغٰى وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الۡعٰدُوۡنَ ۚ﴿۷﴾ وَالَّذِيۡنَ هُمۡ لِاَمٰنٰتِهِمۡ وَعَهۡدِهِمۡ رٰعُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۸﴾ وَ
الَّذِيۡنَ هُمۡ عَلٰى صَلَوٰتِهِمۡ يُحَافِظُوۡنَ ۘ﴿۹﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الۡوٰرِثُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۱۰﴾ الَّذِيۡنَ يَرِثُوۡنَ الۡفِرۡدَوۡسَ ؕ هُمۡ فِيۡهَا خٰلِدُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

Those believers succeeded who show humility in their prayer, who desist from frivolity and who pay *zakāh* and who guard their private parts except for their wives and slave-maidens; so in their case there is no blame on them. However, those who desire others besides them, it is they who exceed the limits. And those who give due regard to their trusts and to their promises, and those who guard their prayers. It is these people who will be the inheritors, who are the inheritors of Firdaws. They shall abide in it forever. (1-11)

Explanation

قَدۡ اَفۡلَحَ الۡمُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۱﴾[1]

Though the word "believers" is general, its foremost connotation is the believers who were bravely migrating from Makkah and preparing to wage *jihād*. The glad tidings of success sounded in this verse relate to the future but they are expressed in the past tense. The purpose is to express their certainty because once something has been decided by God, it is as if it has been done. The success mentioned here primarily relates to the Hereafter because that is the real success and believers always regard it to be their objective. However, also found in it are the glad tidings of establishing God's religion in the land of Arabia that were given in the previous *sūrah*. Since this has been mentioned in detail in the last *sūrah*, in the present *sūrah* the actual reward – Paradise – is referred to. Other achievements are automatically subsumed under it.

1. Those believers succeeded.

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الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ فِيْ صَلَاتِهِمْ خٰشِعُوْنَ ۙ﴿۲﴾[2]

The word خشوع means "humility and meekness." It has been used in the Qur'ān in different forms. The usages of خَشِعَتِ الاَصْوَات[3] and تَخْشَعَ قُلُوْبُهُمْ[4] shed light on its essence. For this reason, exegetes have translated it as "comfort" only. In my opinion, this is not correct. It refers to the real essence of the prayer on which depends the afore-mentioned success. The implication is that not only a person's heart and back should bend down before God, his heart should also fully submit to Him. Such are these believers that the way they stand in the prayer, their recital in it and the prostrations – everything bear witness to the humility in their hearts. It may be kept in mind that in the previous *sūrah*, the directive given was إقام الصلاة. This signifies diligence in the outer form of the prayer. In this *sūrah*, the inner essence of the prayer is alluded to and that too as an attribute of the believers who are being given glad tidings of success.

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُوْنَ ۙ﴿۳﴾[5]

These words depict the influence of the prayer on one's life. The word لَغْو refers to every act that can make a person indifferent to the real purpose of life which is seeking God's pleasure regardless of it being prohibited or not. A prayer punctuated with humility necessarily has a deep impact on the life of a person: he begins abstaining from useless, frivolous and purposeless activities. He is always worried that if he is guilty of any such activity, how will he face his Creator in the Hereafter? He is reminded of this fact at least five teams every day. Obviously, a person, who is so conscientious and sensitive that he feels averse to any useless activity, will seldom indulge in any sin or vulgarity. It is this impact of the prayer on one's life that is mentioned thus in verse 45 of Sūrah al-'Ankabūt: اِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ تَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَ الْمُنْكَرِ.[6] It means that the prayer effectively rebukes him and reminds him five times a day the deeds he is required to do to please God; it informs him of his real destiny and the preparations he must make for it and the strategy he should undertake.

This is the real meaning of the verse. However, the occasion of the discourse is also pointing to a secondary meaning: it is also a sarcastic remark on the frivolous activities the opponents were continuously engaging in against Islam and the disbelievers. This is evident from the following verse:

2. Who show humility in their prayer.
3. 20:108 (lowering of voices).
4. 57:16 (submission of their hearts).
5. Who desist from frivolity.
6. Indeed, the prayer fends off lewdness and immorality.

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وَاِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ اَعْرَضُوْا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوْا لَنَآ اَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ اَعْمَالُكُمْ. (۲۸:۵۵)

And when they listen to nonsensical talk, they pay no heed to it and say: "To us our deeds and to you, yours." (28:55)

At verse 72 of Sūrah al-Furqān, it is similarly said: وَاِذَا مَرُّوْا بِاللَّغْوِ مَرُّوْا كِرَامًا.[7] In the light of these parallel verses, the verse under discussion also implies that God's servants spend their time in remembering their Lord and in reflection on His revelations; they do not have time for the nonsensical talk of their opponents.

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِلزَّكٰوةِ فٰعِلُوْنَ ۙ[8]

After the prayer, the second pillar of religion is *zakāh*, as has been explained in detail in this exegesis. It has been mentioned at length in Sūrah Maryam and Sūrah al-Anbiyā' that every prophet of God directed his followers to pray and to give *zakāh*. Its legal form has remained a little different in every religion; however, it is a common and comprehensive word for spending for the cause of God and its status in religion is that of a counterpart of the prayer and its foremost manifestation. The prayer joins a person with God and *zakāh* joins him to his brethren. A person who is connected with both his creator and his fraternity on the right footing in fact becomes worthy of success in this world and the next. Though this *sūrah* is Makkan and a formal system of *zakāh* was instituted later, however here it is not used as term; it refers to charity in general. Those have interpreted it in the connotation of a verbal noun to mean "purification" are mistaken. This word occurs with the prayer many times in the Makkan *sūrahs* too and at no place is it used in this connotation. In call cases, it connotes charity and spending for the cause of God. Obviously one consequence of this is purification.

From the standpoint of philosophy of religion too, the prayer and the *zakāh* are two arms of faith and the common thing between both is gratitude to God. It is this sense of gratitude that urges a believer to the prayer, which is an embodiment of gratitude. It is this gratitude which stirs a person to spend for the cause of God and to offer sacrifice. Viewed thus, it becomes evident that *zakāh* is a manifestation and an aspect of the prayer. Both necessitate one another.

Moreover, the essence of the prayer is also humility and fear, as mentioned earlier. In this capacity, it stops a person from every sin and vulgarity, as is evident with reference to Sūrah al-'Ankabūt alluded to above. Thus it is stated earlier that those whose prayers are punctuated with humility abstain from useless and frivolous things.

Now more impacts and benefits of the prayer are being mentioned ahead.

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7. And when they have to pass by a frivolous thing, they pass with dignity.
8. And who pay *zakāh*.

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وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِفُرُوْجِهِمْ حٰفِظُوْنَ ۝ اِلَّا عَلٰٓى اَزْوَاجِهِمْ اَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُوْمِيْنَ ۝ فَمَنِ ابْتَغٰى وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْعٰدُوْنَ ۝[9]

These people control their sexual desires and satisfy them only through their wives or slave-maidens.[10] It never happens that they become overcome so much by sexual desires that they become animals and think that it is their right to infiltrate into forbidden realms. The verse states that satisfying the sexual urge within limits is allowed; none can be blamed if they remain in these limits. No one should regard this to be against religiosity, piety and virtue, as is regarded in asceticism and other similar ideologies. However, those who transgress limits are guilty of breaching the limits of God. Here only their crime is mentioned; its punishment is not. The reason is to express severe anger and aversion. On such occasions, silence is much more eloquent.

Here it may be kept in mind that in the current western societies and those influenced by them, the only restriction in this matter relates to coercion and compulsion. If this is not the case, then every person has every type of freedom.

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِاَمٰنٰتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رٰعُوْنَ ۝[11]

اَمٰنٰت refers to all trusts which our Lord has blessed us with in the form of strengths, abilities, obligations and responsibilities or in the shape of favours, blessings, riches and offspring. Also included in them are things people have been entrusted with or those discharging which is our responsibility according to the norms. In a similar way, also included in it are the covenants and promises our Lord has taken from our nature in the unseen world or taken in this world in the form of the *sharī'ah* through His messengers. Moreover, it also comprises all those promises and covenants which we made with God through our nature or through His prophets. Similarly, it also consists of promises made with a group or an individual in this world, whether they are written or oral or are thought to be understood in a civilized society even if they are not made orally or in writing. It is stated by the Almighty that it is these servants of His who abide by all these trusts and promises. They are neither dishonest and rebellious in the matter of their Lord nor are ones who are unfaithful to His creatures or go back on their word with them.

This verse encompasses all religious, moral, legal, and social responsibilities which

9. And who guard their private parts except for their wives and slave-maidens; so in their case there is no blame on them. However, those who desire others besides them, it is they who exceed the limits.

10. The issue of slave-maidens and slaves has been discussed in this exegesis and a detailed treatment will be given to it in the next *sūrah*.

11. And those who give due regard to their trusts and to their promises.

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have been revered in every *sharī'ah*. Here it is a comprehensive statement made after the earlier directives and is in fact a detail of what is concise and this detail is spread all over the Qur'ān.

This aspect of religious wisdom may also be kept in mind that the prayer alone is the real protector of all promises and covenants. The prayer itself, as is evident from the explanation of Sūrah al-Baqarah, is a person's covenant with his Lord. This covenant is revived by every believer five times a day. It also reminds him of all the promises and responsibiliites which are imposed on him. I have been discussing various aspects of the prayer in detail in this exegesis and have also written a separate book "Essence of the Prayer." Readers can look it up for details.

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَلٰى صَلَوٰتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُوْنَ ۝[12]

Deliberation shows that this section of verses began with the mention of the prayer and ends on it too. The prayer has been mentioned at the beginning with regard to its essence: humility before God and at the end with regards to punctuality, vigilance and diligence in offering it. This is because the blessings found in the prayer can only be reaped when it has the essence of humility in it and is also continuously guarded. This is the plant of paradise which does not grow unless it is fully nourished. A little negligence leaves it barren and fruitless. In fact, there is a danger that it might completely wither away. If we want to gain real benefit from it, we must save it from the onslaughts of Satan and nurture it very punctually in a very diligent way. It is then when we will get some idea of the comfort of the eyes God has concealed in it.

The fact that the prayer protects the whole religion is mentioned in the Qur'ān at various instances. This protection alludes to the wisdom that it is through the prayer that all virtues develop and grow and it is the prayer that shields them under its safekeeping. If a person does not adhere to the prayer, he will also not be induce to do good deeds. If the prayer is subtracted from religion and morality, its whole edifice will crash to the ground. It is because of this reason that it is said that he who wastes the prayer will all the more waste religion.

اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْوٰرِثُوْنَ ۝ الَّذِيْنَ يَرِثُوْنَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ ؕ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ۝[13]

These people will forever abide in the Paradise lost by their forefather, Adam (sws). They will have no fear of being expelled from there. They will then stay with him eternally in this abode. This is because they will enter it after defeating their enemy: Satan. Firdaws is among the most majestic parts of Paradise. People who endangered themselves for the cause of the truth in this world will be worthy of it.

12. And those who guard their prayers.

13. It is these people who will be the inheritors, who are the inheritors of Firdaws. They shall abide in it forever.

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A Summary of Verses (1-11)

Though I have been alluding to all essential points while explaining these verses, it seems appropriate that they are reiterated because on them depends the success of the believers. The meaningful sequence in which they are stated is as follows:

1. To God, success of a person is entirely based on the faith that should deeply penetrate into the heart of a person. Mere outward faith has no weight before Him.

2. The foremost manifestation of faith is the prayer. Faith which does not yield the prayer is like a barren tree that can only be used to ignite fire.

3. The real essence of the prayer is humility of the heart. If the prayer is devoid of this trait, it will not have any impact on a person's life.

4. The prayer punctuated with humility stops a person from evil, vulgarity and useless activities. A person acquires God's companionship in the prayer. The awareness of this companionship protects him from all evils that are not befitting for him to indulge in.

5. The second manifestation of faith and the second arm of the prayer is *zakāh* (spending for God's cause). These are the two premier directives of religion and all the *sharī'ah* is based on these two. If a person does not diligently adhere to either of them, he will adhere to none of them. The attack launched by Abū Bakr (rta) against those who were desisting to pay *zakāh* was based on this philosophy of religion.

6. Those who submit their hearts and wealth to God never become so blind in following their desires that they break His limits and commit excesses against the rights and honour of His servants.

7. These people abide by all trusts and promises, whether they relate to God or to His creatures.

8. They safeguard their prayer and their prayer is like a boundary wall that safeguards every aspect of their religion.

9. Those who have the above-mentioned traits will in fact be the dwellers of God's Paradise and will abide in it forever. This in reality is great success.

Details of all these points will be found in the next *sūrah*: Sūrah al-Nūr which is the supplement of this *sūrah*. It will become evident from it that when a person's inner-self is lit up by faith, every aspect of his life, whether individual or collective becomes radiant. Moreover, if a person is devoid of this light, darkness engulfs his inside and outside world.

Section II: Verses (12-22)

The glad tidings given to the believers in the previous section are a definite reality. Similarly, the warnings they conceal for the disbelievers devoid of faith are also a definite reality. Yet what can glad tidings and warning do to those who in the first place do not even believe in the resurrection and in the hereafter. They regard all these

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to be figments of imagination and make fun of them. By presenting the objections of such people, attention is directed to the signs in their inside and outside world. It is evident from these signs that if a person only reflects on the phases of his creation it will become crystal clear that the God Who is capable of doing all this can have no difficulty in re-creating those who die and decay into dust. Similarly, if a person reflects on his outside world, it will become fully evident that after creating mankind, God has not become unconcerned to them. In fact, He is nourishing and nurturing them in a grand way with great devotion and utmost favour. So, when He is undertaking all this in such an elaborate manner, how is it possible that He not hold people accountable for their deeds? Why would He not bring about a Day of Judgement to reward the righteous and punish the wrongdoers? This argument has also been stated in verse 5 of Sūrah al-Ḥajj. Here it is mentioned in more detail and those aspects have also been highlighted here that could not receive an elaborate treatment there.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلٰلَةٍ مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ﴿١٢﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰهُ نُطْفَةً فِيْ قَرَارٍ مَّكِيْنٍ ﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ
عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظٰمًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظٰمَ لَحْمًا ۤ ثُمَّ اَنْشَاْنٰهُ خَلْقًا اٰخَرَ ؕ فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ
اَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ لَمَيِّتُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ تُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ
سَبْعَ طَرَآئِقَ ۖ وَمَا كُنَّا عَنِ الْخَلْقِ غٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءًۢ بِقَدَرٍ فَاَسْكَنّٰهُ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۖ وَاِنَّا عَلٰى
ذَهَابٍۭ بِهٖ لَقٰدِرُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ فَاَنْشَاْنَا لَكُمْ بِهٖ جَنّٰتٍ مِّنْ نَّخِيْلٍ وَّاَعْنَابٍ ۙ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا فَوَاكِهُ كَثِيْرَةٌ وَّمِنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَ
شَجَرَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ طُوْرِ سَيْنَآءَ تَنْۢبُتُ بِالدُّهْنِ وَصِبْغٍ لِّلْاٰكِلِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَاِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْاَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً ؕ نُسْقِيْكُمْ مِّمَّا
فِيْ بُطُوْنِهَا وَلَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَنَافِعُ كَثِيْرَةٌ وَّمِنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَعَلَيْهَا وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾

And We had created a human being from the essence of clay. Then in the form of a drop of fluid, We placed it in a secure spot. Then made this drop of fluid into the form of a blood clot and made the blood clot into a lump of flesh. Thence created bones in the lump. Thereafter, We covered the bones with flesh. Then We made it into a new creation altogether. Thus, blessed is God, the best of creators. Then after all this you surely have to die. Then you shall be raised to life on the Day of Judgement. (12-16)

And We made above you seven skies one over the other. And We did not become oblivious to the creatures. And We sent down water from the skies according to a measure; then lodged it in the earth and We have the power to take it back. Thus from it We have made orchards of dates and grapes for you. There are many fruits in it for

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you by which you savour your taste buds and from which you also eat. And We also made that tree grow which comes out from Mount Sinai. It sprouts with oil and with curry for those who eat. And for you, there is a great lesson in the cattle also. From among what is in their bellies, We make you drink [milk that is tasty] and there are also many other benefits in them for you. And from them you obtain your food also and you also travel on them and on the ships too. (17-22)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلٰلَةٍ مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ﴿١٢﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰهُ نُطْفَةً فِيْ قَرَارٍ مَّكِيْنٍ ﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظٰمًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظٰمَ لَحْمًا ۗ ثُمَّ اَنْشَاْنٰهُ خَلْقًا اٰخَرَ ۭ فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾[14]

The gradual phase-wise creation of a human being has been mentioned in Sūrah al-Ḥajj earlier, as is also alluded to before. There, the opening words were: اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِيْ رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ (if you are in any doubt of being raised to life again …). It is evident from this that the purpose was to prove that people will be raised to life again once they die. Moreover, there the words لِنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ (so that We make evident for you) also occur which point to the reason of the gradual progression in the creation of human beings: the power and wisdom of God manifest themselves in such a way in this sequence of creation that a person does not need any external reasoning regarding the hereafter. In Sūrah al-Ḥajj, every word and component of the relevant verses as well as their purpose have been explained in detail. Repetition is not needed here. All these stages are well known in the creation of a human being. Modern scientific advancements have also brought to the fore certain aspects of this creation which the Qur'ān had merely hinted so that the more knowledge human beings gain, the more they know of these secrets. I have also pointed out certain other things of this category in this exegesis earlier. Everyone knows this secret that a drop of fluid that comes into being from the substance of clay is nurtured and nourished by providence in a gradual way; ultimately, the likes of Socrates, Hippocrates, Aristotle and Galen are created. The question is: Is all this happening of its own accord? Is all this sequence adopted and the nourishment provided a result of unbridled matter? Is all this power, wisdom, providence and affection a meaningless thing which has no purpose and fate? Is the being Who fashions out a human being from a drop of fluid unable to create him again? It is in these questions that the naïve – even if they are great philosophers and scientists – have differed with one another. In order to answer these very questions,

14. And We had created a human being from the essence of clay. Then in the form of a drop of fluid, We placed it in a secure spot. Then made this drop of fluid into the form of a blood clot and made the blood clot into a lump of flesh. Thence created bones in the lump. Thereafter, We covered the bones with flesh. Then We made it into a new creation altogether. Thus, blessed is God, the best of creators.

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the Qur'ān has directed the attention of a person to his physical self. People do not have to go far in finding the answer. If they reflect on their own phases of creation, they will get all the answers.

The words "then We made it into a new creation altogether" point to the incredible nature of transformation a drop of fluid undergoes to become a living human being. If people witness this marvel around them, why do they think that the One responsible for this marvel will find it difficult to recreate them?

The words "thus, blessed is God, the best of creators" express the inference every person who reflects on the phases of creation should reach. The God Who showed His signs, marvels and miracles in every person is blessed and beneficent: an ordinary drop of fluid was fashioned into a miraculous living being and endowed it with grand traits; such are his abilities that angels bowed down to him and he became the vicegerent of God on earth. The implication is that by reflecting on these things, a person does not merely acknowledge the existence of God, he is convinced that his creator is wise, beneficent, powerful, blessed and peerless.

Readers may keep in mind the style that the superlative أفعل especially when annexed to a plural noun, at times does not signify any comparison; it only expresses the magnificence of an attribute. Thus the expression اَحۡسَنُ الۡخٰلِقِيۡنَ would mean that He is not merely a creator; He is the best of creators; He has not created human beings in a perfunctory way; on the contrary, He has made them in the best of moulds with the best of abilities. Some exegetes have changed the meaning of the word "creator" because of not being aware of this style. Obviously, this is not the slightest needed. The purpose here is to show that the creation of a human being itself testifies that he has not been created by matter that is unbridled or by a prime mover or by a first cause nor has he evolved on its own. On the contrary, He has been brought into existence by a blessed being who is an outstanding creator.

ثُمَّ اِنَّكُمۡ بَعۡدَ ذٰلِكَ لَمَيِّتُوۡنَ ﴿١٥﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّكُمۡ يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ تُبۡعَثُوۡنَ ﴿١٦﴾[15]

This is the actual inference for which all the phases of creation have been mentioned earlier. There is no reason to deny being raised to life again: how can it be difficult for the God Whose marvels they see in their creation?

وَلَقَدۡ خَلَقۡنَا فَوۡقَكُمۡ سَبۡعَ طَرَآئِقَ ۖ وَمَا كُنَّا عَنِ الۡخَلۡقِ غٰفِلِيۡنَ ﴿١٧﴾[16]

The word طَرَآئِقَ is the plural of طَرِيۡقَة. It connotes "stripes." Here by mentioning an adjective its noun is referred to. This is a common style of Arabic. The allusion is to

15. Then after all this you surely have to die. Then you shall be raised to life on the Day of Judgement.

16. And We made above you seven skies one over the other. And We did not become oblivious to the creatures.

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seven skies which have stripes. Here this word signifies both the brilliance and splendour of the sky and also to the rain which is mentioned ahead in a very profound way.

The word كُنَّا here expresses "majesty" as it does in كَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا. The implication is that after creating human beings, God did not become unconcerned towards them; He continued to nourish and sustain them in a very elaborate way.

The previous verse mentions the creation of human beings, and the purpose is to point to the fact that recreating them is not at all a difficult proposition. Now in this verse God's providence is referred to. After creating this world, God has not become indifferent to the good and evil that goes on in it. He continues to nourish and sustain this world. He has created seven splendid skies and sends down rain whereby living beings thrive.

وَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءًۢ بِقَدَرٍ فَاَسْكَنّٰهُ فِى الْاَرْضِ ۖ وَاِنَّا عَلٰى ذَهَابٍۭ بِهٖ لَقٰدِرُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾[17]

The water sent down from the sky by the Almighty produces all life forms on earth. And it is His mercy that He send it down in a specific measure otherwise it can wreak havoc if He allows it to. It is then that this water becomes a bane instead of a boon, as was the case in Noah's deluge. Moreover, it is God's mercy and providence that this water is housed in the earth and like a safe treasure benefits all living beings. Had God wanted, He could have seized all this supply of water and not a single drop would have remained on earth. It is evident from this that both the heavens and the earth are being controlled by the same intention. If different intentions were controlling both, why would those in charge of the heavens send down water in such an exact quantity for the dwellers of the earth and also maintain its supply from a reservoir. What is further evident is that this singular being is very merciful who is nourishing this world in a very profound way.

فَاَنْشَاْنَا لَكُمْ بِهٖ جَنّٰتٍ مِّنْ نَّخِيْلٍ وَّاَعْنَابٍ ۖ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا فَوَاكِهُ كَثِيْرَةٌ وَّمِنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾[18]

The mention of تَاْكُلُوْنَ shows that a word to the effect تَتَفَكَّهُوْنَ is suppressed after فَوَاكِهُ كَثِيْرَةٌ. Examples of such suppression can be seen earlier in this exegesis.

The implication of this verse is that God has not merely provided the means and resources for people to live, He has actually gone on to savour their taste-buds. A person could have lived on bread but God created it for him fruits of all sorts. As mentioned in verse 32 of Sūrah al-Kahf, to the Arabs an ideal orchard was that of

17. And We sent down water from the skies according to a measure; then lodged it in the earth and We have the power to take it back.

18. Thus from it We have made orchards of dates and grapes for you. There are many fruits in it for you by which you savour your taste buds and from which you also eat.

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grapes bordered by creepers of dates and in between there were patches reserved to grow various grains and other seasonal fruits. To them, the real important fruits were grapes and dates; yet other fruits and grains were also produced. The words "many fruits" and "from which you also eat" are actually pointing to them.

وَشَجَرَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ طُوْرِ سَيْنَآءَ تَنْۢبُتُ بِالدُّهْنِ وَصِبْغٍ لِّلْاٰكِلِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾[19]

The word شَجَرَةً refers to an olive tree. Though it is not named, the traits mentioned clearly point to it. The mount of Sinai was a place famous for its production. Its curry was very famous among the Arabs. The People of the Book not only regarded it to be an edible, they also viewed it with religious reverence. The word صِبْغٍ means "curry." It was also like a tasty curry like butter that would provide vitality. It is mentioned in an undefined way to express its grandeur. The implied meaning would be: صِبْغٌ لِّلْاٰكِلِيْنَ طَيِّبٌ (a tasty curry for those who eat). This in fact is a further use of it besides others.

وَاِنَّ لَكُمْ فِى الْاَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً ؕ نُسْقِيْكُمْ مِّمَّا فِىْ بُطُوْنِهَا وَلَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَنَافِعُ كَثِيْرَةٌ وَّمِنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾[20]

The word عِبْرَةٌ means to cross over from reality to another and learn a lesson from it. It is used as an undefined noun to magnify it. The implication is that the things that are mentioned earlier carry a lesson and if people reflect, there is a great lesson in the cattle also.

The second object of the verb نُسْقِيْكُمْ is not expressed. At another instance, it is mentioned thus in verse 66 of Sūrah al-Naḥl: لَّبَنًا خَالِصًا سَآئِغًا لِّلشّٰرِبِيْنَ. Similarly, here the words مِّمَّا فِىْ بُطُوْنِهَا are rather concise. Once again in the same verse of Sūrah al-Naḥl, they are explained thus: مِنْۢ بَيْنِ فَرْثٍ وَّدَمٍ. If all these suppressions are taken into account, the overall meaning would be: We have made you drink pure and unadulterated milk from among faeces and blood found in the bellies of animals.

The words وَ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَنَافِعُ كَثِيْرَةٌ point to their other benefits besides the specific ones: not only their milk, many other things are of utility to human beings. They are used to travel and as beasts of burden. They help people in harvesting crops. Their meat, hide and wool is also useful for them. Even their faeces are used as manure. At the same time, they form a food supply for people. Their fresh meat is also consumed and their meat is also dried and preserved for eating while travelling. There are some animals whose pure utility is in their capacity of food for human beings.

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19. And We also made that tree grow which comes out from Mount Sinai. It sprouts with oil and with curry for those who eat.

20. And for you, there is a great lesson in the cattle also. From among what is in their bellies, We make you drink [milk that is tasty] and there are also many other benefits in them for you. And from them you obtain your food also.

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وَ عَلَيْهَا وَ عَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾[21]

The word تُحْمَلُوْنَ encompasses embarking on them for travel and using them as carriers. Since Arabs were generally nomads, they would travel from one place to another. For this reason, both travelling and having their provisions carried were important for them. To fulfil this need, the Almighty created the camel for them which is the ship of the desert. It is mentioned with the ship in this verse. In other words, the role played by the camel in land-travel is played by the ship in sea-travel.

The real purpose of mentioning all these things is that people can learn a lesson: can it be imagined about the Lord Who has cared for people in such minute ways that He will remain indifferent to them? Does not His providence impose an obligation on them? And is it not a necessary consequence of this that He bring about a day in which people are held accountable about their responsibilities; those who fulfilled them be rewarded and those who spent their lives in negligence be punished? Obviously, human intellect and nature bear witness in favour of this second aspect. Those who are provided everything by a noble being and do not carry out the obligation to these favours are ingrates and it is essential that they see the consequence of this ingratitude.

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Section III: Verses (33-50)

Coming up is a brief reference to the history of the prophets and those who rejected them. The purpose is to prove in the light of history the premise that is mentioned: success of the believers and the fate of those have rejected the truth. In this regard, the established practice of God is also referred to that those who deny God's messenger will be doomed eternally; however, since God makes the wrongdoers undergo a trial in this world and for this to happen, He gives them some period of respite; as a result, they consider this reprieve to be their success; the fact is that this respite tightens the noose around them.

Verses 42-45 of the previous *sūrah* also mention the anecdotes of God's messengers and their rejecters. However, it is very brief. Here, they are dealt with in more detail. However, by name only Noah (sws) is mentioned among the earlier messengers and Moses (sws), Aaron (sws) and Jesus (sws) among the later ones. Other messengers are referred to without naming them.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

وَ لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوْحًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ فَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَقَالَ الْمَلَؤُا

21. And you also travel on them and on the ships too.

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الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖ مَا هٰذَآ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ ۙ يُرِيْدُ اَنْ يَّتَفَضَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَاَنْزَلَ مَلٰٓئِكَةً ۚ مَّا
سَمِعْنَا بِهٰذَا فِيْٓ اٰبَآئِنَا الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿۲۴﴾ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا رَجُلٌۢ بِهٖ جِنَّةٌ فَتَرَبَّصُوْا بِهٖ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿۲۵﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ انْصُرْنِيْ بِمَا
كَذَّبُوْنِ ﴿۲۶﴾ فَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْهِ اَنِ اصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِاَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّوْرُ ۙ فَاسْلُكْ فِيْهَا مِنْ
كُلٍّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَاَهْلَكَ اِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَلَا تُخَاطِبْنِيْ فِي الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ۚ اِنَّهُمْ مُّغْرَقُوْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾
فَاِذَا اسْتَوَيْتَ اَنْتَ وَمَنْ مَّعَكَ عَلَى الْفُلْكِ فَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ نَجّٰىنَا مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اَنْزِلْنِيْ
مُنْزَلًا مُّبٰرَكًا وَّاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِيْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ وَّاِنْ كُنَّا لَمُبْتَلِيْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾ ثُمَّ اَنْشَاْنَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا
اٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿۳۱﴾ فَاَرْسَلْنَا فِيْهِمْ رَسُوْلًا مِّنْهُمْ اَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾ وَقَالَ الْمَلَاُ مِنْ
قَوْمِهِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِلِقَآءِ الْاٰخِرَةِ وَاَتْرَفْنٰهُمْ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۙ مَا هٰذَآ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ ۙ يَاْكُلُ مِمَّا
تَاْكُلُوْنَ مِنْهُ وَيَشْرَبُ مِمَّا تَشْرَبُوْنَ ﴿۳۳﴾ وَلَئِنْ اَطَعْتُمْ بَشَرًا مِّثْلَكُمْ اِنَّكُمْ اِذًا لَّخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿۳۴﴾ اَيَعِدُكُمْ اَنَّكُمْ اِذَا مِتُّمْ
وَكُنْتُمْ تُرَابًا وَّعِظَامًا اَنَّكُمْ مُّخْرَجُوْنَ ﴿۳۵﴾ هَيْهَاتَ هَيْهَاتَ لِمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿۳۶﴾ اِنْ هِيَ اِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوْتُ وَ
نَحْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوْثِيْنَ ﴿۳۷﴾ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا رَجُلٌ ۣ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا وَّمَا نَحْنُ لَهٗ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۳۸﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ
انْصُرْنِيْ بِمَا كَذَّبُوْنِ ﴿۳۹﴾ قَالَ عَمَّا قَلِيْلٍ لَّيُصْبِحُنَّ نٰدِمِيْنَ ﴿۴۰﴾ فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ بِالْحَقِّ فَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ غُثَآءً ۚ
فَبُعْدًا لِّلْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۴۱﴾ ثُمَّ اَنْشَاْنَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ قُرُوْنًا اٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿۴۲﴾ مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ اُمَّةٍ اَجَلَهَا وَمَا
يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ ﴿۴۳﴾ ثُمَّ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا تَتْرَا ؕ كُلَّمَا جَآءَ اُمَّةً رَّسُوْلُهَا كَذَّبُوْهُ فَاَتْبَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ بَعْضًا وَّجَعَلْنٰهُمْ
اَحَادِيْثَ ۚ فَبُعْدًا لِّقَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۴۴﴾ ثُمَّ اَرْسَلْنَا مُوْسٰى وَاَخَاهُ هٰرُوْنَ ۙ بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿۴۵﴾ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَ
مَلَا۟ئِهٖ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا وَكَانُوْا قَوْمًا عَالِيْنَ ﴿۴۶﴾ فَقَالُوْٓا اَنُؤْمِنُ لِبَشَرَيْنِ مِثْلِنَا وَقَوْمُهُمَا لَنَا عٰبِدُوْنَ ﴿۴۷﴾ فَكَذَّبُوْهُمَا
فَكَانُوْا مِنَ الْمُهْلَكِيْنَ ﴿۴۸﴾ وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿۴۹﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَاُمَّهٗٓ اٰيَةً وَّ
اٰوَيْنٰهُمَآ اِلٰى رَبْوَةٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَّمَعِيْنٍ ﴿۵۰﴾

And We sent Noah as a Messenger to his nation. So, he invited them: "O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no deity other than Him. Then do you not fear His wrath?" So, the leaders of his nation who were guilty of disbelief said: "He is

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but a mortal like you. He wants to make himself superior to you. And had God wanted to send a messenger, He would have sent an angel. We have never heard such a thing from our elders of the past. He is but a mortal inflicted with madness. So, wait for some days about him." (23-25)

Then, he prayed: "My Lord! Help me through the very thing in which they have denied me." So, We sent a revelation to him: "Build an ark under Our watch and direction. Then when Our directive arrives and the storm bursts, place in it pairs of all kinds and also board on it your people except those among them about whom judgement has already been passed, and do not say anything to Me about those who have been unjust to their souls. They will certainly drown." (26-27)

Thus when you and your companions board the ship, say: "Gratitude be to the God Who has delivered us from oppressive people," and pray: "My Lord! Disembark me in a blessed way and you are the best of those who disembark." Indeed, there are great signs in this anecdote and indeed We subject [people to] trials. (28-30)

Then, after them, We raised other people, and also sent to them a messenger from among themselves with the message: "Worship God. You have no other deity besides Him. Then do you not fear Him?" And the leaders of his nation who were guilty of disbelief and had denied the meeting of the last day and who We had blessed with affluence in the life of this world, said: "He is but a mortal like you. He eats what you eat and drinks what you drink. And if you accept what a person similar to you says, you shall be in great loss. Does he threaten you: 'When you die and become clay and bones, you shall be raised up again?' Far-fetched and very unlikely is what you are being threatened with. Life is only the life of this world. We die and live right here and we shall never be raised to life. This is only a human being who has fabricated a falsehood against God and We are certainly not going to believe in him." (31-38)

The messenger prayed: "My Lord! Help me through the thing in which they have denied me." God said: "Very soon they will regret." Then a harsh cry overtook with what was certain to come. So, We made them into withered shrubs. Then the curse of God be on such wretched people. (39-41)

Then We raised other nations. Neither a nation crosses the time set for it nor falls short of it. Then, We sent Our messengers in succession. Whenever its messenger came to a nation, they denied him. Then We too made one nation follow the other and made them into anecdotes. So, those people be cursed who do not profess faith. (42-44)

Then We sent Moses and His brother Aaron as messengers with Our signs and a manifest proof to the Pharaoh and his courtiers. At this, they showed conceit and they were a very arrogant people. Thus they said: "Should We believe in what two humans similar to us say even though their nation is our slave?" So, they denied them and ultimately were destroyed. And We gave Moses the Book so that the people of his nation be guided. (45-49)

And We made the son of Mary and his mother a great sign and gave them refuge on a peaceful hillock which had a fountain. (50)

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Explanation

وَلَقَدۡ اَرۡسَلۡنَا نُوۡحًا اِلٰى قَوۡمِهٖ فَقَالَ يٰقَوۡمِ اعۡبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اِلٰهٍ غَيۡرُهٗ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوۡنَ ﴿۲۳﴾[22]

A very eloquent digression occurs from this verse. Earlier reward and punishment were substantiated on the basis of God's providence. In verse 22, the ship was mentioned as one of God's manifestation of providence. Now that historical signs are being cited, the anecdote of Noah (sws) is taken up the foremost. It is also a major landmark in this ancient history and he and his followers were actually saved by God by means of a ship. After mentioning the ship, an incident related to a person in whose case a ship played a prominent role is narrated. It is as if one thing has sprung from another.

In both the Torah and the Qur'ān, the history of the messengers begins with Noah (sws). Various aspects of his anecdote have been mentioned in the previous *sūrahs*. Here it is mentioned with a particular purpose. As has been stated earlier, these people thought that after creating this world, God had detached Himself from it. The verse under discussion implies that this notion is entirely incorrect. God has not only always arranged for its material growth and development, He has sent messengers for its moral and spiritual advancement. Those who denied their messengers were destroyed by God once the truth had been conclusively conveyed to them. On the other hand, those who followed them were given granted success and salvation by Him. This dealing of God with this world is proof of the fact that one day He will bring about a day in which He will decide among the righteous and the wrongdoers with justice and reward or punish each person accordingly.

The object of اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوۡنَ is suppressed after it. The implied meaning would be: why don't you people fear God's wrath as you are associating partners with Him; this is open rebellion which makes you worthy of His anger.

فَقَالَ الۡمَلَؤُا الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا مِنۡ قَوۡمِهٖ مَا هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثۡلُكُمۡ ۙ يُرِيۡدُ اَنۡ يَّتَفَضَّلَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ ؕ وَلَوۡ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَاَنۡزَلَ مَلٰٓئِكَةً ۖ مَّا سَمِعۡنَا بِهٰذَا فِىۡۤ اٰبَآئِنَا الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ﴿۲۴﴾[23]

The word مَلَاءٌ means the leaders, chiefs and nobles of a nation, as has been explained under verse 246 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. It is they who always deny the call of truth the most vehemently. This is because being in charge of the evil collective system of their times, they know that the success of the messenger is tantamount to their own death. Thus when they see that the call of the messenger is having an impact

22. And We sent Noah as a Messenger to his nation. So, he invited them: "O People of My Nation! Worship God only. You have no deity other than Him. Then do you not fear His wrath?"

23. So, the leaders of his nation who were guilty of disbelief said: "He is but a mortal like you. He wants to make himself superior to you. And had God wanted to send a messenger, He would have sent an angel. We have never heard such a thing from our elders of the past.

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on upright people, they try to play all sorts of pranks to undo its affect and take control of the minds and hearts of these people. First of all, they attack the sincerity and intention of a messenger by regarding his claim to be false, as the verse mentions. The eloquence in the expression يَّتَفَضَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ needs special attention. They did not say that the messenger wants to snatch away their leadership; on the contrary, they stated that he wants to make them subservient to him. The poison found in this sentence to incite the simple masses is apparent to every keen eye.

The words "and had God wanted to send a messenger, He would have sent an angel" mention the intellectual argument of these naïve people for denying the messenger: they contended that in the first place, they do not even need a messenger for their guidance since they are self-guided, and if supposedly God wanted to send a messenger, He would have selected an angel for this special mission; what is the meaning of sending human beings like them for this purpose?

What is said in the last part of the verse "we have never heard such a thing from our elders of the past" is also brought up in verse 68 ahead thus: اَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ اَمْ جَآءَهُمْ مَّا لَمْ يَاْتِ اٰبَآءَهُمُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ (then have these people not reflected on this discourse or has something come to them which did not come to their earlier forefathers? In verse 36 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, the words used are: وَّمَا سَمِعْنَا بِهٰذَا فِيْٓ اٰبَآئِنَا الْاَوَّلِيْنَ (and we have never heard of such things from our predecessors). Similarly, in verse 7 of Sūrah Ṣu'ād, it is said: مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهٰذَا فِي الْمِلَّةِ الْاٰخِرَةِ (we have not heard of this in this later period).

اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا رَجُلٌۢ بِهٖ جِنَّةٌ فَتَرَبَّصُوْا بِهٖ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿٢٥﴾[24]

These leaders tried to convince the masses that the claim of this person that an angel visits him is totally false. It is actually a sign of lunacy whereby he imagines all this and attributes it to divine revelation. By the words "so, wait for some days about him" they wanted to drive home the point that his words are baseless and people must not fear the punishment he is threatening them with. All these are figments of his imagination which will soon prove baseless. The leaders of the Quraysh also used to say something very similar about the Prophet (sws). In verse 30 of Sūrah al-Ṭūr, it is stated: اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ شَاعِرٌ نَّتَرَبَّصُ بِهٖ رَيْبَ الْمَنُوْنِ (do they say: that he is a poet for whom we await an adverse turn of fortune?). They meant that no one should be over-awed by the magical words of Muḥammad (sws) and think that they have some basis and that he has control of decisions regarding their future. This is mere poetry and has a limited life span. Soon it will vanish. Just as many of their poets have exited from this world after composing poetry, this person will also one day just pass away into oblivion. It may be kept in mind that when the leaders of an era think that the masses are regarding a certain person to be their guide and saviour, they become very worried. They try to convince their followers that all this is just a temporary spell of magic that he is

24. He is but a mortal inflicted with madness. So, wait for some days about him."

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weaving around them.

قَالَ رَبِّ انْصُرْنِيْ بِمَا كَذَّبُوْنِ ﴿٢٦﴾[25]

These are the words of prayer uttered by Noah (sws) wherein He has requested God to decide between him and his nation and help him by punishing his nation. He called out to his nation day and night but they turned a deaf ear to him and denied him regarding this punishment. This prayer will be mentioned in detail in Sūrah Nūḥ. Here immediately after this prayer in the very next verse, Noah (sws) has been asked to construct a ship and save himself and his followers from God's scourge. This is enough indication to show that this prayer of Noah (sws) was meant to request God to fulfil His promise of punishment. This is evident from verse 39 ahead and in its response God has assured them thus: عَمَّا قَلِيْلٍ لَّيُصْبِحُنَّ نٰدِمِيْنَ. فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ (very soon they will regret; then a harsh cry overtook them). It should be kept in mind that in the lives of God's prophets and their adversaries, the last phase of their struggle has always been that the punishment with which they had threatened them with was demanded by these rebellious people. When there was a delay in its arrival in accordance with the practice of God that He gives full respite to people before punishing them, these people would ridicule the prophets. They would say that since the messengers have not been able to bring the promised doom they have been continuously been threatening them with, they are liars and so is their threat. It as this instance, that the messengers have prayed: رَبَّنَا افْتَحْ بَيْنَنَا وَ بَيْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَ اَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْفٰتِحِيْنَ (Lord! Judge fairly between us and our nation and You are the best of judges (7:89)). Noah (sws) too uttered this prayer in this phase and it means what I have just explained above. Zamakhsharī has preferred the same meaning. His words are: انصرنی بإنجاز ما وعدتهم من العذاب وهو ما كذبوه فيه (Lord! Help me by fulfilling your promise of punishment that you have threatened them with; it is this thing about which their nation denied them).[26]

فَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْهِ اَنِ اصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِاَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا وَ فَارَ التَّنُّوْرُ ۙ فَاسْلُكْ فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلٍّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَ اَهْلَكَ اِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَلَا تُخَاطِبْنِيْ فِي الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ۚ اِنَّهُمْ مُّغْرَقُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾[27]

This verse, in fact, the whole anecdote of Noah (sws) occurs in Sūrah Hūd. For this

25. Then, he prayed: "My Lord! Help me through the very thing in which they have denied me."

26. Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 3, 186.

27. So, We sent a revelation to him: "Build an ark under Our watch and direction. Then when Our directive arrives and the storm bursts, place in it pairs of all kinds and also board on it your people except those among them about whom judgement has already been passed, and do not say anything to Me about those who have been unjust to their souls. They will certainly drown."

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reason, I will only briefly explain it. Details can be looked up there. The words وَحْيِنَا بِاَعْيُنِنَا وَ mean that Noah (sws) should build this ship under God's guidance and watch. It is evident from the Torah that God had informed Noah (sws) about its complete plan to the minutest detail through divine revelation so that it is built in accordance with the needs of the huge task for which it was being designed. The word اَمْر refers to God's directive. فَارَ التَّنُّوْرُ is an idiom similar to حمی الوطیس. In determining the meaning of idioms, the meaning of individual words is not considered. Idioms always imply what they are used for as a whole. This idiom refers to the tempestuous and turbulent nature of the storm. In the expression مِنْ كُلٍّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ the word كُلّ (all) refers to what the mind of the speaker specifies. In other words, it refers to all those animals which directly relate to the financial needs of people. The word اثْنَيْنِ is meant to explain زَوْجَيْنِ. Ie., two from every animal, referring to its male and female species. Noah (sws) should not worry about boarding more than this quantity. I have already explained in Sūrah al-Anbiyā' that the word اَهْل not only means family, it also refers to one's companions and followers. It is evident from other instances of the Qur'ān that some people of his nation did profess faith in Noah (sws) even though they were few in number. The words اِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ refer to people who are destined to die in accordance with the established practice of God regarding conclusive communication of the truth by a messenger. The most prominent among them was Noah's son, as is evident from other instances in the Qur'ān. It is stated that such people will not be with Noah (sws) in the ship. The words "do not say anything to Me about those who have been unjust to their souls" refer to those who have called for their own doom by denying him. The implication is that this should not happen when these raging waves of God's wrath engulf them from all sides, any feelings of sympathy arise in him and he starts praying to God for their protection. Once the punishment comes, this phase will pass. After this, his prayer about this matter will not be answered and each of them will necessarily drown. This special aspect of the style in "do not say anything to Me about those who have been unjust to their souls" should also remain in consideration that such is the nature of God's punishment that even those for whose help this punishment is sent start feeling sympathy and concern for their enemies. However, no one's prayer or intercession can be of avail before God.

فَاِذَا اسْتَوَيْتَ اَنْتَ وَمَنْ مَّعَكَ عَلَى الْفُلْكِ فَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ نَجّٰنَا مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اَنْزِلْنِيْ مُنْزَلًا مُّبٰرَكًا وَّاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾[28]

This boarding of the ship by Noah (sws) and his companions signified migrating

28. Thus when you and your companions board the ship, say: "Gratitude be to the God Who has delivered us from oppressive people," and pray: "My Lord! Disembark me in a blessed way and you are the best of those who disembark."

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from his people the way messengers migrate from their people. For this reason, he was advised to supplicate to God in accordance with the occasion. At the time of migration, similar supplications were made by other messengers too. Muḥammad (sws) was instructed thus in this regard in verse 80 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl: رَّبِّ اَدْخِلْنِیْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّ اَخْرِجْنِیْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَّ اجْعَلْ لِّیْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ سُلْطٰنًا نَّصِیْرًا (Lord! Wherever you want to make me enter, let it be an entry with honour and from wherever you want me to leave, make me leave with honour and make political authority my helper especially from Your self). Since the supplication in the verse under discussion was taught by God, it also signifies glad tidings of success in the future. The implication is that now that Noah's Lord has delivered him from the company of these wretched and mean people, He will take care of him in the best way and wherever He will take him, He will make that place blessed for him: he and his companions will grow in number and flourish and these few people with their limited economic resources will one again inhabit this world.

اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیٰتٍ وَّاِنْ كُنَّا لَمُبْتَلِیْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾[29]

The verse refers to the real purpose for which this anecdote has been narrated. The most prominent sign in this anecdote is that after creating this world, God did not detach Himself from it; on the contrary, He sent messengers for the guidance and instruction of people. The second thing that becomes evident is that those who oppose and deny a messenger are given respite by God to a certain extent; ultimately, He seizes them and when He does so none can stop Him. The third thing that becomes evident is that in the struggle between good and evil, the messenger and his companions always succeed. However, before this success, they have to pass through a period of trial. The last part of the verse "and indeed We subject [people to] trials" refers to this very established practice of God. The fourth thing that becomes evident is that just as the message of every messenger has remained the same, the style and manner of the opposition of their enemies have also remained the same. For this reason, every anecdote of a messenger and every account of a nation is a means of learning for other messengers and nations.

ثُمَّ اَنْشَاْنَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا اٰخَرِیْنَ ﴿۳۱﴾[30]

The word قَرْن means "century" and also refers to the people and nation of an era. After destroying Noah (sws) and his nation, God raised other nations from him and his companions of the ship. The reference is to the 'Ād, the Thamūd. In Sūrah al-A'rāf, it is mentioned that the 'Ād succeeded the nation of Noah (sws) and the Thamūd

29. Indeed, there are great signs in this anecdote and indeed We subject [people to] trials.
30. Then, after them, We raised other people,

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succeeded the 'Ād.

فَاَرۡسَلۡنَا فِيۡهِمۡ رَسُوۡلًا مِّنۡهُمۡ اَنِ اعۡبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اِلٰهٍ غَيۡرُهٗ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوۡنَ ﴿۳۲﴾[31]

This verse refers to the messengers sent to the 'Ād and the Thamūd ie. Hūd (sws) and Ṣāliḥ (sws). Their accounts have been related earlier in Sūrah Hūd and Sūrah al-A'rāf. In اَنِ اعۡبُدُوا اللّٰهَ, a governing noun is suppressed before اَن. Ie. "They were sent with the message to worship God; there is no other deity besides Him." This message is exactly the same as that of Noah (sws) as has been alluded to earlier. The verse also asserts that the messengers that were sent belonged to their own nation. They did not belong to the angels or to the jinnkind. This is a great favour of God that He sent a messenger to each nation from among it. Various aspects of this favour have been explained at other instances in this exegesis.

وَقَالَ الۡمَلَاُ مِنۡ قَوۡمِهِ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا وَكَذَّبُوۡا بِلِقَآءِ الۡاٰخِرَةِ وَاَتۡرَفۡنٰهُمۡ فِى الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا ۙ مَا هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثۡلُكُمۡ ۙ يَاۡكُلُ مِمَّا تَاۡكُلُوۡنَ مِنۡهُ وَيَشۡرَبُ مِمَّا تَشۡرَبُوۡنَ ﴿۳۳﴾[32]

The word مَلَاءٌ has been explained earlier under verse 23. This verse mentions some traits of these arrogant people that shed light on the reason of their arrogance and rebelliousness. The first of these traits is that these people rejected the hereafter and being raised up before God. The second trait is their affluence in this world which became a trial for them. They contended that their worldly successes are a proof of the veracity of their beliefs and deeds; they further reckoned that in the first place the day of judgement is a hoax and if it is not, then there is no reason why they will be blessed there too the way they have been blessed here. It was because of this affluence and prosperity, they were not willing to accept any person's superiority over them and that too of a person who did not have any status or affluence. They tried to hide this arrogance by uttering what this verse states.

وَلَئِنۡ اَطَعۡتُمۡ بَشَرًا مِّثۡلَكُمۡ اِنَّكُمۡ اِذًا لَّخٰسِرُوۡنَ ﴿۳۴﴾[33]

This verse mentions a ploy they adopted to incite the emotions of their masses. They tried to convince them that if they accept this messenger, God knows in what pit he will land them in and how he will utterly rout them. The implication is that before

31. And also sent to them a messenger from among themselves with the message: "Worship God. You have no other deity besides Him.

32. And the leaders of his nation who were guilty of disbelief and had denied the meeting of the last day and who We had blessed with affluence in the life of this world, said: "He is but a mortal like you. He eats what you eat and drinks what you drink.

33. And if you accept what a person similar to you says, you shall be in great loss.

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taking such a disastrous step, they should fully contemplate the consequences. These leaders meant that they can teach them the benefits and the harms of this matter.

اَيَعِدُكُمْ اَنَّكُمْ اِذَا مِتُّمْ وَكُنْتُمْ تُرَابًا وَّعِظَامًا اَنَّكُمْ مُّخْرَجُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ هَيْهَاتَ هَيْهَاتَ لِمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾[34]

The verb وعد here means "to frighten and to threaten." This usage is evident from verse 268 of Sūrah al-Baqarah الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ (Satan threatens you with poverty). The word هَيْهَاتَ is verbal noun. It is used in Arabic in different forms and connotes something far-fetched and that which is unlikely to happen. Repetition incorporates stress and emphasis in it. The interrogative nature of the sentence is meant to express abhorrence.

The implication of the verse is that people should not be over-awed by such imaginary claims of the messenger.

اِنْ هِيَ اِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوْتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوْثِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾[35]

It may be kept in mind that whether these rejecters of the hereafter belong to the past or of the current era, they do not reject the hereafter on the basis of some reason. They reject it because they think that it was an unlikely and an improbable event even though they believe in things thousands of times more unlikely and improbable. At a number of places, the Qur'ān has expressed amazement at this strange contradiction.

اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا رَجُلٌ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا وَّمَا نَحْنُ لَهٗ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾[36]

The earlier allegations were made by their wise chiefs to lead their masses away. The verse under discussion reflects their own "wisdom" about the messenger of God which has led themselves away from him.

قَالَ رَبِّ انْصُرْنِيْ بِمَا كَذَّبُوْنِ ﴿٣٩﴾[37]

This verse has occurred earlier and explained in detail.

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34. Does he threaten you: 'When you die and become clay and bones, you shall be raised up again?' Far-fetched and very unlikely is what you are being threatened with.

35. Life is only the life of this world. We die and live right here and we shall never be raised to life.

36. This is only a human being who has fabricated a falsehood against God and We are certainly not going to believe in him."

37. The messenger prayed: "My Lord! Help me through the thing in which they have denied me."

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قَالَ عَمَّا قَلِيْلٍ لَّيُصْبِحُنَّ نٰدِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾[38]

God has sounded assurance to the messenger after his supplication: very soon His promise will manifest itself and these people will regret their arrogance.

فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ بِالْحَقِّ فَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ غُثَآءً ۚ فَبُعْدًا لِّلْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤١﴾[39]

The word صَّيْحَةٌ means "a shout" and in the Qur'ān it signifies God's punishment at various instances regardless of its form. It would be incorrect to regard it to be a punishment accompanied with a sound.

The word حَقٌّ refers to the promise of truth that was to necessarily manifest itself if the messenger was denied and which he had informed them of.

The word غُثَآءٌ is used in the Qur'ān and in classical Arabic poetry in two different meanings. It shall be discussed in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-A'lā. Here it refers to withered shrubs and weeds.

The implication of the verse is that after the supplication of the messenger, God's torment – which was being regarded as a bluff – visited them and they were totally routed and were transformed into straws and weeds.

The words فَبُعْدًا لِّلْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ express a curse. It signifies God's punishment.

ثُمَّ اَنْشَاْنَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ قُرُوْنًا اٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾[40]

In verse 31, the word قَرْنٌ is mentioned. Here its plural قُرُوْنٌ is mentioned. It is evident from this that after this gradually many nations born from Noah's descendants and messengers were sent to each of them by God for their guidance. Though neither the Torah nor the Qur'ān mention the name of all messengers, both indicate that messengers were sent to each nation. The Qur'ān has stated this fact explicitly; however, since the Jews have been after destroying the history of all prophets except those belonging to their lineage, this is not mentioned explicitly in the Torah. Yet insinuations are found in it.

مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ اُمَّةٍ اَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾[41]

An incomplete verb is suppressed before the indefinite verbs in accordance with the conventional principles of Arabic and because concomitant factors point to it, there also exists a suppression of text between the previous and the current verse. If this

38. God said: "Very soon they will regret."

39. Then a harsh cry overtook with what was certain to come. So, We made them into withered shrubs. Then the curse of God be on such wretched people.

40. Then We raised other nations.

41. Neither a nation crosses the time set for it nor falls short of it.

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suppression is unfolded, the overall discourse would be to the effect: We sent messengers to these nations but they denied them; as a result, ultimately every nation met its fate after fulfilling its appointed term; neither did the punishment visit a nation before this term nor were they granted any reprieve once this term was fulfilled. I have explained at other instances that this term has been appointed by God by measuring their moral decadence. Only God knows when this decadence reaches such an extent that a nation should now be wiped off from the face of the earth.

In other words, this verse is warning the Quraysh that they should not ask God's messenger to hasten this punishment. Once their appointed term expires, they too will be wiped out. If they seek to hasten this punishment, God is not going to comply with their demand nor will He delay its arrival by a minute when this time expires. This is an established practice of God regarding nations and they too will face it.

ثُمَّ اَرۡسَلۡنَا رُسُلَنَا تَتۡرَا ؕ كُلَّمَا جَآءَ اُمَّةً رَّسُوۡلُهَا كَذَّبُوۡهُ فَاَتۡبَعۡنَا بَعۡضَهُمۡ بَعۡضًا وَّجَعَلۡنٰهُمۡ اَحَادِيۡثَ ۚ فَبُعۡدًا لِّقَوۡمٍ لَّا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿۴۴﴾[42]

The word تَتْرٰى is actually the changed form of وَتَرٰى The و has changed into ت in accordance with a common linguistic principle. The expression جاء القوم تترى would mean that people came one after the other in succession.

The guidance provided by God through His messengers increased in proportion to the number of nations born. So much so, messengers also came to different nations in the same period. Though we do not find details in history, it is evident from the Qur'ān that the period of Abraham (sws) and Lot (sws) was the same. Similarly, the prophets Moses (sws), Aaron (sws) and Shu'ayb (sws) coexisted. This arrangement made by God is enough testimony to the fact that He never remained negligent of His creatures' guidance. Yet, every nation ended up rejecting its messenger. As a result, they were doomed one after the other. Moreover, nations which showed conceit on their grandeur and splendour, affluence and advancement were made tales of the past. The sentence فَبُعْدًا لِّقَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ is an expression of curse, as is indicated earlier under verse 41. It is evident from the occasion and context of this sentence here that even though these nations existed in the past, God is still angry with them for their disbelief and even today curses them when they are mentioned.

ثُمَّ اَرۡسَلۡنَا مُوۡسٰى وَاَخَاهُ هٰرُوۡنَ ۙ بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَسُلۡطٰنٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ ۙ﴿۴۵﴾[43]

After briefly referring to all the messengers who came after Noah (sws), now those

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42. Then, We sent Our messengers in succession. Whenever its messenger came to a nation, they denied him. Then We too made one nation follow the other and made them into anecdotes. So, those people be cursed who do not profess faith.

43. Then We sent Moses and His brother Aaron as messengers with Our signs and a manifest proof.

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messengers are mentioned whose detailed account is found in the Bible. In my opinion, the word "signs" signifies the miracles which manifested themselves at the hands of Moses (sws) for the Pharaoh and his people. Its details are found in the Torah and its references are cited in this exegesis as well. The expression "manifest proof" refers to the miracle of the staff. This is a mention of the specific after the general. This miracle was like a clear and decisive sign and for this reason it is called "manifest proof." It was through this miracle that the Pharaoh and his courtiers suffered a humiliating defeat before his nation and a group of adept magicians. At some instances, the Qur'ān has called it بَيِّنَةٌ (obvious proof). In verse 33 of Sūrah al-Raḥmān (لَا تَنْفُذُوْنَ اِلَّا بِسُلْطٰنٍ), the word سُلْطٰن is used in the meaning of God's sanction. This word is very appropriate for the miracle of the staff too because it was in fact God's sanction in the hands of Moses (sws)

اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَ مَلَا۟ئِهٖ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا وَ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا عَالِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ فَقَالُوْۤا اَنُؤْمِنُ لِبَشَرَيْنِ مِثْلِنَا وَ قَوْمُهُمَا لَنَا عٰبِدُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ فَكَذَّبُوْهُمَا فَكَانُوْا مِنَ الْمُهْلَكِيْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾[44]

The implication is that these people also adopted the same attitude which rejecters of God's messengers have always adopted. The words وَ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا عَالِيْنَ refer to a trait of their national character: their arrogance was not the result of a temporary bout of rage. They were in fact a very rebellious and arrogant people. It was because of this temperament of the Pharaoh and his people that when the Almighty sent Moses (sws) to them, He said: اِذْهَبْ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ اِنَّهٗ طَغٰى (go to the Pharaoh; he has become rebellious, (20:24)). The reason that Moses (sws) was given the miracle of the staff in the very first phase was because his opponents were very tyrannical and to counter them, he needed such a weapon. The words "should We believe in what two humans similar to us say even though their nation is our slave" are an expression of their arrogance. As a consequence of this, they denied their messengers and were doomed.

وَ لَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾[45]

After the Pharaoh and his people were destroyed, this is the reward given to Moses (sws) and his nation. The very person who was thought to be lowly by the Pharaoh and his people since he was a member of the nation that were under their subjugation was chosen by God along with his nation and given a divine book. This book provided them with guidance in the various stages of their life. It may be kept in mind here that

44. To the Pharaoh and his courtiers. At this, they showed conceit and they were a very arrogant people. Thus they said: "Should We believe in what two humans similar to us say even though their nation is our slave?" So, they denied them and ultimately were destroyed.

45. And We gave Moses the Book so that the people of his nation be guided.

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there is no other possibility than to regard the word "book" refer to the Torah. It is known that it was given to Moses (sws) after his migration. The plural يَهْتَدُوْنَ is used in deference to the word "nation" that has been mentioned earlier in the statement of the Pharaoh and his people thus: قَوْمُهُمَا لَنَا عٰبِدُوْنَ (their nation is our slave).

وَجَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَاُمَّهٗٓ اٰيَةً وَّاٰوَيْنٰهُمَآ اِلٰى رَبْوَةٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَّمَعِيْنٍ ﴿۵۰﴾[46]

The word رَبْوَةٌ means "a high level ground." ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ means "peaceful" and مَعِيْنٍ means "a fountain."

This verse refers to the time of Jesus' birth when Mary (sws) was directed to sit under a far off tree. This place was peaceful and on a high level. A tree bearing dates was found there and below it a fountain of pure water ran. In this phase of her life, Mary (sws) badly needed a peaceful secluded place in order to protect herself from the allegations of her people. God provided such a place to her out of His special grace and mercy. All these details are mentioned in Sūrah Maryam. There I have pointed out the location of this high level ground and also explained the grand nature of this incident. Since all these details have been mentioned in the previous *sūrahs*, the Qur'ān has only given a brief hint here.

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Section IV: Verses (51-67)

In the succeeding verses, it is explained that God gave the same religion to all the messengers but their nations split it up. Now each of them is engrossed with what they have and is not willing to hear anything against it. After that, Muḥammad (sws) is assured and asked to give some more respite to his people; they are very happy at their worldly achievements and think that they have gained a lot. The fact is that they are only preparing their doom without realizing it. The real achievements are today being reaped by those who fear God and are professing faith in His revelations. Indeed, they are the destined winners of this course. As far as these megalomaniacs are concerned, very soon the time will come when they will lament their misfortune but to no avail.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوْا مِنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَاعْمَلُوْا صَالِحًا ۭ اِنِّىْ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۵۱﴾ وَاِنَّ هٰذِهٖٓ اُمَّتُكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّاَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوْنِ ﴿۵۲﴾ فَتَقَطَّعُوْٓا اَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا ۭ كُلُّ حِزْبٍۢ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُوْنَ ﴿۵۳﴾ فَذَرْهُمْ فِيْ

46. And We made the son of Mary and his mother a great sign and gave them refuge on a peaceful hillock which had a fountain.

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غَمْرَتِهِمْ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ اَيَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّمَا نُمِدُّهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ مَّالٍ وَّبَنِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرٰتِ ؕ بَلْ لَّا
يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّشْفِقُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَ
الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْتُوْنَ مَآ اٰتَوْا وَّقُلُوْبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ اَنَّهُمْ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ رٰجِعُوْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾
اُولٰٓئِكَ يُسٰرِعُوْنَ فِي الْخَيْرٰتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سٰبِقُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ وَلَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا وَلَدَيْنَا كِتٰبٌ يَّنْطِقُ بِالْحَقِّ
وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ بَلْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ فِيْ غَمْرَةٍ مِّنْ هٰذَا وَلَهُمْ اَعْمَالٌ مِّنْ دُوْنِ ذٰلِكَ هُمْ لَهَا عٰمِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ
اَخَذْنَا مُتْرَفِيْهِمْ بِالْعَذَابِ اِذَا هُمْ يَجْـَٔرُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ لَا تَجْـَٔرُوا الْيَوْمَ ۖ اِنَّكُمْ مِّنَّا لَا تُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَدْ كَانَتْ
اٰيٰتِيْ تُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ عَلٰٓى اَعْقَابِكُمْ تَنْكِصُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ مُسْتَكْبِرِيْنَ ۖ بِهٖ سٰمِرًا تَهْجُرُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾

O Messengers! Eat pure things and do righteous deeds. I fully know whatever you do. And this *ummah* of yours is a single *ummah* and I am your Lord. So, keep fearing Me. (51-52)

Thus the *ummahs* split among them their religion into pieces. Now each group is engrossed in whatever it has. So, leave them for some days in this frenzy of theirs. Do they think that We are increasing their wealth and children, then We are increasing their well-being? In fact, they are unaware of the actual reality. (53-56)

Indeed, those who are always scared of their Lord's fear and who believe in the revelations of their Lord and who do not associate partners with their Lord and those who when give something for His cause, give with their hearts trembling that they have to return to their Lord – it is these people who are taking lead in good works and they shall certainly acquire them – and We do not burden a soul beyond its capacity and with Us is a book which shall accurately disclose and not the slightest injustice shall they suffer. (57-62)

In fact, their hearts are indifferent to it and they have some other involvements besides this. They shall remain engrossed in them until when We seize their affluent with torment, they will start pleading. Do not plead and implore now. We shall not the slightest help you now. When My revelations were recited to you, you would turn to run away with arrogance, as if you are leaving a story-teller. (63-67)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوْا مِنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَاعْمَلُوْا صَالِحًا ؕ اِنِّيْ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٥١﴾[47]

This is a reference to the guidance given by God to all His messengers. The purpose is to show that the messengers followed this guidance and invited their respective

47. O Messengers! Eat pure things and do righteous deeds. I fully know whatever you do.

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people to follow it. However, their people because of their polytheistic superstitions proscribed wholesome and pure edibles and regarded unwholesome and impure edibles as allowed. Thereby they disobeyed their messengers and took to disbelief.

The last part of the verse "I fully know whatever you do" carries both assurance and warning: if people do good deeds, they are in God's knowledge and will be fully rewarded by Him, and if they do evil deeds, these too are in God's knowledge and they will not be left by Him without punishing them.

وَاِنَّ هٰذِهٖٓ اُمَّتُكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّاَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوْنِ ﴿۵۲﴾ فَتَقَطَّعُوْٓا اَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا ؕ كُلُّ حِزْبٍۭ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُوْنَ ﴿۵۳﴾[48]

All messengers of God have invited people to the same religion and all these messengers form a single *ummah* and also tried making people into a single *ummah* as well. God alone is the Lord of all.

In other words, instead of accepting this actual reality, these *ummahs* split this single religion into pieces because of mutual malice and now each is engrossed in what it has. In verses 92-93 of Sūrah al-Anbiyā' after referring to the message of all prophets, precisely the same premise is stated thus: اِنَّ هٰذِهٖٓ اُمَّتُكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً ۖ وَّ وَتَقَطَّعُوْٓا اَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ اَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْنِ (All this is a one ummah of yours and I only am your Lord. So, worship Me alone. And they tore their religion into pieces between themselves).

The same topic has been mentioned in even more detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah in these words:

كَانَ النَّاسُ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً ۟ فَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ النَّبِيّٖنَ مُبَشِّرِيْنَ وَمُنْذِرِيْنَ ۪ وَاَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيْمَا اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ ؕ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيْهِ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ بَغْيًۢا بَيْنَهُمْ (۲: ۲۱۳)

Mankind was just a single community. [Then differences arose between them.] So, God sent forth prophets as bearers of glad tidings and as warners, and with them He sent down the Book as the decisive truth so that it may settle between people the matter in which they had differed with one another. And only they differed in it to whom it was given after very clear admonitions had come to them because of malice for one another. (2:213)

Here readers may well try to fully understand the stance of the Qur'ān regarding the prophets and their nations. Though this has been fully explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah al-Anbiyā, yet by not properly understanding it people have been inflicted by great misconceptions. For this reason, the following details are presented.

48. And this *ummah* of yours is a single *ummah* and I am your Lord. So, keep fearing Me. Thus the *ummahs* split among them their religion into pieces. Now each group is engrossed in whatever it has.

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The Qur'ān does not accept that the prophets and messengers who came to this world invited people towards separate religions and created separate *ummahs*. On the contrary, it claims that every prophet struggled to set up only one *ummah* – the Muslim *ummah*. When nations spoiled this religion, God sent other prophets and messengers to reform this state of affairs. Those prophets and messengers did not present anything but the real religion; they expended all their efforts to make people adhere to the real religion and if and when it was according to God's wisdom, they explained the requirements of this religion even further. The Qur'ān is the last rung of this blessed ladder. It has presented the real religion – to which Adam (sws) and Noah (sws) all the way to Jesus (sws) called people – in its original pristine form. Whatever aspects of this religion that needed completion were completed by the last prophet of God who came in accordance with the prophecies of the previous ones. As such, all nations have this same religion. However, because of prejudice and narrow-mindedness, nations opposed it and now each group is engrossed in whatever part it has however much adulterated and incompolete it may be. It may be kept in mind that this has been stated as an assurance to the Prophet (sws): he should not fret over them for such unfortunate are they that they do not want to benefit from their own lost treasure.

فَذَرْهُمْ فِيْ غَمْرَتِهِمْ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿٥٤﴾[49]

The word غَمْرَةٌ means the frenzy of indifference. The verse addresses the Prophet (sws) and tells him that he has cautioned and prodded them to a great extent and they still were not prepared to mend their ways; so, now he should leave them alone for soon they will see the fate of this negligence. The expression حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ refers to the time period that has been prescribed for them and which was now about to expire.

اَيَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّمَا نُمِدُّهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ مَّالٍ وَّبَنِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرٰتِ ؕ بَلْ لَّا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾[50]

The words مَّالٍ وَّ بَنِيْنَ signify worldly affluence in a comprehensive way. The implication is that the real reason of their frenzy and negligence is their worldly riches and prosperity and this has lulled them into a deep slumber. They think that this life of luxury is proof of their success and these successes and triumphs will continue to increase and therefore they should not spoil their jubilation by the warnings of a warner. The verse informs them that they have drawn a wrong conclusion with regard to their prosperity. What they are regarding to be their success is actually a noose that is going to gradually tighten around their neck: this respite is going to soon end and

49. So, leave them for some days in this frenzy of theirs.

50. Do they think that We are increasing their wealth and children, then We are increasing their well-being? In fact, they are unaware of the actual reality.

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they will then be seized by God. Unfortunately, because of their thick-headedness they are not realizing this.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّشْفِقُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْتُوْنَ مَآ اٰتَوْا وَّقُلُوْبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ اَنَّهُمْ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ رٰجِعُوْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ يُسٰرِعُوْنَ فِي الْخَيْرٰتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سٰبِقُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾[51]

Here readers should take another look at the first ten verses of the *sūrah*. The believers who were given glad tidings of success there are mentioned here again in slightly different words. Following are their traits that have been enumerated here. These are the traits of those Muslims who in seeking the pleasure of God had turned away from all worldly attractions even if this meant endangering their lives.

Their first quality is that they are sacred of God's fear all the time. This is evident from their prayers. Thus earlier in verse 2, it was said: هُمْ فِيْ صَلَاتِهِمْ خٰشِعُوْنَ.

Their second quality is: هُمْ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ. They do not make fun of God's revelations like the arrogant; in fact, when these revelations are recited out to them by God's messenger they believe in them and follow them.

Their third quality is: هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُوْنَ. They fully trust their Lord and not associate anyone with Him.

Their fourth quality is: يُؤْتُوْنَ مَآ اٰتَوْا وَّقُلُوْبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ اَنَّهُمْ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ رٰجِعُوْنَ. They spend for the cause of God and never do this to show off and to show conceit; they always do so to seek His pleasure since one day they will have to face Him. The words اَنَّهُمْ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ رٰجِعُوْنَ (that they have to return to their Lord), in my opinion, occur as an explanation of وَجِلَةٌ. They explain the reason of the fear they have in their hearts.

The words اُولٰٓئِكَ يُسٰرِعُوْنَ فِي الْخَيْرٰتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سٰبِقُوْنَ imply that it is these people who are trying to take the initiative in doing righteous deeds and will be rewarded for them and not those who regard the respite given to them as their success and are actually blindly running into the tunnel of their destruction. This verse occurs in contrast to verse 56 (نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرٰتِ) earlier and an explanation of verse 1 (اَفْلَحَ قَدْ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ) of this *sūrah*.

A comparison between the two verses shows that in verse 56, it was said: "We are increasing their well-being" and here the words are: "it is these people who are taking lead in good works." This comparison refers to the fact that whatever a person gets in this world is from God and it is not given to him as a gift; it is rather a trial for him. However, whatever a person will get in the Hereafter will be the consequence of his efforts; thus whoever wants to take lead, should take lead in this sphere and not in the

51. Indeed, those who are always scared of their Lord's fear and who believe in the revelations of their Lord and who do not associate partners with their Lord and those who when give something for His cause, give with their hearts trembling that they have to return to their Lord – it is these people who are taking lead in good works and they shall certainly acquire them.

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one everything of which is temporary and given as a trial.

وَلَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا وَلَدَيْنَا كِتٰبٌ يَّنْطِقُ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾[52]

As a parenthetical sentence, this verse gives assurance and glad tidings to the believers similar to the glad tidings given to them at the end of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The implication is that this no doubt is a trial but they should rest assured that God does not put those who take lead for His cause in a trial that is beyond their capacity. They should be content that whatever hardships, whether great or small, they are bearing for God's cause are written in a register with Him. On the Day of Judgement, that register will present the exact record of the deeds of people; everyone will be judged accordingly and will suffer not the slightest injustice.

بَلْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ فِيْ غَمْرَةٍ مِّنْ هٰذَا وَلَهُمْ اَعْمَالٌ مِّنْ دُوْنِ ذٰلِكَ هُمْ لَهَا عٰمِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ اَخَذْنَا مُتْرَفِيْهِمْ بِالْعَذَابِ اِذَا هُمْ يَجْـَٔرُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾[53]

This sentence beginning with بَلْ (in fact) relates to the misconception of the arrogant stated earlier: they regarded their prosperity and affluence to be a proof of their good deeds in this world and of their good fate in the Hereafter. Earlier, after stating this misconception, the discourse had shifted to the believers. Now once again the same topic is brought up. It is said that the hearts of these people are indifferent to the warnings of the messenger and they are engrossed in their frenzied engagements. They find no attraction in the deeds of the believers mentioned in verses 57-60. The deeds that interest them are some others and they are absorbed in them. Ultimately, when God's scourge will seize them, they will implore and beg but to no avail.

The word يَجْـَٔرُ means "implore and plead." مُتْرَفِيْن means "the rich and the prosperous." The punishment of denying a messenger actually comes for these rich because it is they who have the real malice and animosity for his warnings. However, others who do not belong to their category but have become pawns in the hands of these rich because of their own misdeeds are also included in the sphere of this punishment. Thus they too are subjected to this scourge.

لَا تَجْـَٔرُوا الْيَوْمَ ۖ اِنَّكُمْ مِّنَّا لَا تُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَدْ كَانَتْ اٰيٰتِيْ تُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ عَلٰٓى اَعْقَابِكُمْ تَنْكِصُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾[54]

52. And We do not burden a soul beyond its capacity and with Us is a book which shall accurately disclose and not the slightest injustice shall they suffer.

53. In fact, their hearts are indifferent to it and they have some other involvements besides this. They shall remain engrossed in them until when We seize their affluent with torment, they will start pleading.

54. Do not plead and implore now. We shall not the slightest help you now. When My

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The implication of the verse is that after their attitude of aversion in the previous world, they should not expect any lenience from God. Nor will there be anyone else beside Him who could be of help to them. In the anecdote of the Pharaoh too, exactly the same situation had arisen: he too had acknowledged the Lord of Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) when he was surrounded by stormy waves but this was not deemed acceptable. He was scolded that the time for accepting faith had expired.

It has been referred to earlier that this statement in the verse could be uttered from the mouth and could also be a portrayal of the situation.

مُسْتَكْبِرِيْنَ ۖ بِهٖ سٰمِرًا تَهْجُرُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾[55]

Our exegetes have faced a lot of difficulty in the interpretation of this verse. It would require great space to cite their opinions and then critically evaluate them. For this reason, I will just present my own interpretation here.

The preposition ب after مُسْتَكْبِرِيْنَ evidences the fact that this word encompasses the meaning of making fun. Examples of this usage can be seen in the previous sections of this exegesis. A group of exegetes regard the antecedent of the pronoun to be اٰيٰتِ (revelations) mentioned in the previous verse, and interpret it to refer to ذِكْر (reminder) and كِتَاب (the book). This interpretation cannot be regarded as linguistically incorrect. The words اٰيت, ذِكْر and كِتَاب are mentioned synonymously in the Qur'ān. However, in my opinion, this is over-stretching and is not needed. At times, the antecedent of a pronoun is not mentioned in words; it is evident from the discourse and concomitant indications determine it. Examples of this usage occur both in the Qur'ān and in classical Arabic poetry. Several examples of it can be seen in the previous sections of this book and some very eloquent ones are coming up in the last chapter. For this reason, I believe that the antecedent of this pronoun is the messenger whose rejection and being mocked at is discussed in this *sūrah* and whose recital of verses is mentioned in verse 66 earlier in the words: قَدْ كَانَتْ اٰيٰتِيْ تُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ.

The word سٰمِرًا means "a story-teller." It can be the object of the verb and can also be regarded as *hāl* (state) from the genitive pronoun in بِهٖ. Several examples of such types of *hāl* have occurred earlier in this exegesis.

The word تَهْجُرُوْنَ is used in its conventional meaning: "to leave." There is no need to interpret it in a different way.

If one feels satisfied with this parsing of the discourse, then what is said from لَا تَجْـَٔرُوا الْيَوْمَ until now can thus be stated in simple words: There is no use in pleading and shouting; neither will God hear your wailings nor can anyone else save you from Him; the time to please Him was when His messenger of delivering His revelations; but such was their senselessness that they would evade him with great arrogance while

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revelations were recited to you, you would turn to run away.

55. With arrogance, as if you are leaving a story-teller.

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making fun of him as if he was a story-teller not worth listening to.

It may be kept in mind that when the Prophet (sws) would narrate the anecdotes of the previous nations before the affluent people of the Quraysh, they would make fun of him instead of learning a lesson. They would try to lead away their masses by saying that this person has nothing but anecdotes of the past.

Section V: Verses (69-92)

In the succeeding verses, the disbelievers are rebuked on their careless attitude. After that, the Prophet (sws) is sounded assurance: he should not lose hope because of their stubbornness and arrogance; he is on the right path and these people have deviated from it; they will observe their fate from their eyes. If God inflicts any calamity on them to warn them, even then they will not realize. In fact, as soon as the calamity leaves them, they will return to their ill-ways. After this, the signs found within a human being and the ones outside him are referred to so that people should reflect and stop behaving in an indifferent way. However, in response, these people regarded all the warnings of the messenger to be anecdotes of the past. After this, their attention is directed at their contradictory views by posing a question: on the one hand, they accept and declare the truth, but then they lose their senses and state what is the opposite and wander away into error.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

اَفَلَمۡ يَدَّبَّرُوا الۡقَوۡلَ اَمۡ جَآءَهُمۡ مَّا لَمۡ يَاۡتِ اٰبَآءَهُمُ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ﴿۶۸﴾ اَمۡ لَمۡ يَعۡرِفُوۡا رَسُوۡلَهُمۡ فَهُمۡ لَهٗ مُنۡكِرُوۡنَ ﴿۶۹﴾ اَمۡ
يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ بِهٖ جِنَّةٌ ؕ بَلۡ جَآءَهُمۡ بِالۡحَقِّ وَ اَكۡثَرُهُمۡ لِلۡحَقِّ كٰرِهُوۡنَ ﴿۷۰﴾ وَ لَوِ اتَّبَعَ الۡحَقُّ اَهۡوَآءَهُمۡ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمٰوٰتُ وَ
الۡاَرۡضُ وَ مَنۡ فِيۡهِنَّ ؕ بَلۡ اَتَيۡنٰهُمۡ بِذِكۡرِهِمۡ فَهُمۡ عَنۡ ذِكۡرِهِمۡ مُّعۡرِضُوۡنَ ﴿۷۱﴾ اَمۡ تَسۡـَٔلُهُمۡ خَرۡجًا فَخَرَاجُ رَبِّكَ خَيۡرٌ ۖ وَّ
هُوَ خَيۡرُ الرّٰزِقِيۡنَ ﴿۷۲﴾ وَ اِنَّكَ لَتَدۡعُوۡهُمۡ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسۡتَقِيۡمٍ ﴿۷۳﴾ وَ اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ لَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِالۡاٰخِرَةِ عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ
لَنٰكِبُوۡنَ ﴿۷۴﴾ وَ لَوۡ رَحِمۡنٰهُمۡ وَ كَشَفۡنَا مَا بِهِمۡ مِّنۡ ضُرٍّ لَّلَجُّوۡا فِىۡ طُغۡيَانِهِمۡ يَعۡمَهُوۡنَ ﴿۷۵﴾ وَ لَقَدۡ اَخَذۡنٰهُمۡ بِالۡعَذَابِ فَمَا
اسۡتَكَانُوۡا لِرَبِّهِمۡ وَ مَا يَتَضَرَّعُوۡنَ ﴿۷۶﴾ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا فَتَحۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ بَابًا ذَا عَذَابٍ شَدِيۡدٍ اِذَا هُمۡ فِيۡهِ مُبۡلِسُوۡنَ ﴿۷۷﴾ وَ
هُوَ الَّذِىۡۤ اَنۡشَاَ لَكُمُ السَّمۡعَ وَ الۡاَبۡصَارَ وَ الۡاَفۡـِٕدَةَ ؕ قَلِيۡلًا مَّا تَشۡكُرُوۡنَ ﴿۷۸﴾ وَ هُوَ الَّذِىۡ ذَرَاَكُمۡ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَ اِلَيۡهِ
تُحۡشَرُوۡنَ ﴿۷۹﴾ وَ هُوَ الَّذِىۡ يُحۡىٖ وَ يُمِيۡتُ وَ لَهُ اخۡتِلَافُ الَّيۡلِ وَ النَّهَارِ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ﴿۸۰﴾ بَلۡ قَالُوۡا مِثۡلَ مَا قَالَ

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الْاَوَّلُوْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾ قَالُوْٓا ءَاِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّعِظَامًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبْعُوْثُوْنَ ﴿۸۲﴾ لَقَدْ وُعِدْنَا نَحْنُ وَاٰبَآؤُنَا هٰذَا مِنْ قَبْلُ اِنْ
هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿۸۳﴾ قُلْ لِّمَنِ الْاَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيْهَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۸۴﴾ سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ اَفَلَا
تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۸۵﴾ قُلْ مَنْ رَّبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿۸۶﴾ سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿۸۷﴾ قُلْ
مَنْۢ بِيَدِهٖ مَلَكُوْتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّهُوَ يُجِيْرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾ سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ فَاَنّٰى تُسْحَرُوْنَ ﴿۸۹﴾
بَلْ اَتَيْنٰهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿۹۰﴾ مَا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ وَّلَدٍ وَّمَا كَانَ مَعَهٗ مِنْ اِلٰهٍ اِذًا لَّذَهَبَ كُلُّ اِلٰهٍۢ بِمَا خَلَقَ
وَلَعَلَا بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ؕ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ ﴿۹۱﴾ عٰلِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۹۲﴾

Have these people not reflected on this word? Or has that come to them which did not come to their earlier forefathers? Or have they not recognized their messenger; for this reason, they are denying him? Or they say: "He is inflicted a little by insanity. This is not insanity. In fact, he has brought the truth to them but most of them are averse to the truth. And had the truth being in accordance with their desires, the heavens and the earth and what is between them all would have been destroyed. In fact, We have brought to them their share of reminder. But they are evading their reminder. (68-71)

Are you asking for some payment from them? The reward of your Lord is better for you and He is the best provider of sustenance. And indeed, you are calling them to a straight path. And those who do not believe in the Hereafter have gone astray from the straight path. [And if after inflicting them with a trial, We] had showed mercy to them and eliminated their hardship, they would have continued to wander about like while being adamant on their rebelliousness. And We seized in torment those who were like them, but neither did they bow to their Lord nor did they plead. Until when We open the door of a harsh torment to them, they have will totally lose hope in it. (72-77)

And it is He Who has made for you ears, eyes and hearts. Yet, very seldom are you grateful. And it is He Who has scattered you in the earth; then you will be gathered towards Him. And it is He Who gives life and death and in His control is the alternation of the night and the day. Then do you not understand? (78-80)

In fact, they have said the same thing what their predecessors had said. They say: "When we die and become clay and bones, will we be raised to life again? We and before us our forefathers too were threatened of it. These are only tales of the ancient." (81-83)

Ask them: To whom belongs this earth and those in it, if you know? They will reply: "To God." Say: So, do you not receive a reminder from it? Ask: Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and the glorious throne? They will say: "All these belong to God." Say: So, do you not fear this God? Ask: Who is it that has authority over

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everything and He gives refuge but no one other than Him can give refuge, if you know? They will say: "All this is God's authority alone." Say: Then where do you lose your senses? (84-89)

In fact, We have brought the truth to them and they are absolute liars. God has not made anyone His offspring; and neither is there any other deity besides Him. If such was the case, each deity would have taken his creation and walked away, and would have attacked another. Exalted is God from such things they state. He knows the manifest and the hidden. And far aloft is He from what they associate with Him. (90-92)

Explanation

اَفَلَمۡ يَدَّبَّرُوا الۡقَوۡلَ اَمۡ جَآءَهُمۡ مَّا لَمۡ يَاۡتِ اٰبَآءَهُمُ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ﴿۶۸﴾[56]

The purpose of this and the succeeding interrogative statements is to express sorrow on the attitude of the addressees and to rebuke them. The word الۡقَوۡل (word) here refers to the Qur'ān, evasion from which is mentioned in the previous verse. Since the statement here expresses sorrow and rebuke, it is left incomplete. At another, the Qur'ān (47:24) states that their hearts have been bolted. For this reason, its words are not able to penetrate into them. It is sheer ignorance to be startled and led away from the Qur'ān because it is against the traditions of their forefathers. These traditions in themselves are not necessarily correct. They must also conform to the norms of human nature and intellect. Moreover, these people are chided to look beyond them. Their real forefathers are Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). They were proponents and preachers of this religion. Why don't these people follow these noble ancestors and why are they insisting to follow those ancestors who are absolutely unaware of religion.

اَمۡ لَمۡ يَعۡرِفُوۡا رَسُوۡلَهُمۡ فَهُمۡ لَهٗ مُنۡكِرُوۡنَ ﴿۶۹﴾[57]

This verse informs the Quraysh of a grave danger in the light of an established practice of God mentioned very clearly in the Qur'ān. According to this practice, the Almighty sends a messenger to conclusively communicate the truth to a nation who is from among them. If the nation professes faith in him, God makes it succeed and grants it authority in the land. On the other hand, if a nation denies the messenger, it is necessarily destroyed after this conclusive communication. For this reason, the coming of a messenger in a nation is a very delicate phase of its life. Its fate is decided in this period. Unfortunate are those who do not appreciate the precarious nature of this phase and show indifference to their messenger.

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56. Have these people not reflected on this word? Or has that come to them which did not come to their earlier forefathers?

57. Or have they not recognized their messenger; for this reason, they are denying him?

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Thus the verse actually warns the Quraysh on their short-sightedness: have they not recognized their messenger and for this reason are continuing to deny him or are they denying him intentionally. In the latter case, this ploy will work badly for them.

اَمۡ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ بِهٖ جِنَّةٌ ؕ بَلۡ جَآءَهُمۡ بِالۡحَقِّ وَ اَكۡثَرُهُمۡ لِلۡحَقِّ كٰرِهُوۡنَ ﴿۷۰﴾[58]

The verse implies that if in order to fool their people they say that the messenger has been inflicted with lunacy, then this is a proof of their own lunacy. The messenger is in no such state. Whatever he is presenting is the absolute truth and each and every word uttered by him is going to come true. The fact is that these people have a strong aversion from the truth and for this reason are calling the messenger mad. When a patient regards the medicines of his doctor to be sour and is not prepared to take them, then instead of regarding himself to be sick he actually regards the doctor's advice to be sheer nonsense. Same was the case with these people. They were not prepared to leave their vices and adopt the blunt truth. Thus they regarded the messenger to be insane so that this could hide their own insanity.

وَلَوِ اتَّبَعَ الۡحَقُّ اَهۡوَآءَهُمۡ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمٰوٰتُ وَالۡاَرۡضُ وَمَنۡ فِيۡهِنَّ ؕ بَلۡ اَتَيۡنٰهُمۡ بِذِكۡرِهِمۡ فَهُمۡ عَنۡ ذِكۡرِهِمۡ مُّعۡرِضُوۡنَ ﴿۷۱﴾[59]

These verses explain the difference between the nature of personal desires and of the truth. Both are as far apart from one another as the East and the West. The demands and requisites of both are very different. If, as they want, the truth preached by the messenger follows their desires, then the necessary consequence of this would be destruction of the whole universe. The reason for this is that they are advocates of evil instead of good, injustice instead of justice, vice instead of virtue, dishonesty instead of honesty – and most of all polytheism instead of monotheism and rejection instead of acceptance of the Day of Judgement. If all these values are replaced the way they desire, the whole moral system of this world will be disrupted. And if polytheism is also acknowledged in it, then the system of this universe cannot survive even for a day. This reality is explained further ahead in verse 91 in these words: مَا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِنۡ وَّلَدٍ وَّمَا كَانَ مَعَهٗ مِنۡ اِلٰهٍ اِذًا لَّذَهَبَ كُلُّ اِلٰهٍۢ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَا بَعۡضُهُمۡ عَلٰى بَعۡضٍ (if such was the case, each deity would have taken his creation and walked away, and would have attacked another).

The implication is that these people want the truth to the follow them while their own salvation lies in following the truth itself. The creator of the heavens and the

58. Or they say: "He is inflicted a little by insanity. This is not insanity. In fact, he has brought the truth to them but most of them are averse to the truth.

59. And had the truth being in accordance with their desires, the heavens and the earth and what is between them all would have been destroyed. In fact, We have brought to them their share of reminder. But they are evading their reminder.

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earth cannot leave the universe to their mercy; these people should now themselves decide whether they want to follow the truth or end up being wiped out while adhering to falsehood. If they want life, then they must follow the truth whether it is sour or sweet. There is no other way that can give them life.

The words بَلْ اَتَيْنٰهُمْ بِذِكْرِهِمْ فَهُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِهِمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ sound the same warning that is sounded earlier in verse 69 in different words thus: اَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوْا رَسُوْلَهُمْ. The implication is that if these people think that this Qur'ān is a story authored by a storey-teller, they have totally misunderstood. This is their share of reminder that God has sent them for conclusive communication of the truth. If they do not benefit from this reminder, they should keep in mind that they will meet the same fate as the nations before them which did not give due importance to God's reminder sent to them. The established practice of God has been referred to earlier that messengers were sent by Him to every nation to remind people of the hereafter. Nations which duly valued this reminder succeeded and those which did not were destroyed.

Here this established practice of God is alluded to and it is stated that these people are evading this reminder while being unmindful of its consequences.

اَمْ تَسْـَٔلُهُمْ خَرْجًا فَخَرَاجُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ ۖ وَّهُوَ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ ﴿۷۲﴾[60]

This verse assures the Prophet (sws) and rebukes his opponents. The implication of the verse is that he is distributing free what he gained free and not asking them for any charges. If these people do not give importance to this favour, then it is their own deprivation. If they think that they will be able to harm him by not accepting his message, then they are grossly mistaken. The Prophet (sws) is told that the reward of his Lord is the best for them and He is the best of providers. God's messengers are advocates of the truth; their preaching has all its provisions. Same is the example of the righteous that carry on with the task of these messengers.

وَاِنَّكَ لَتَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿۷۳﴾ وَاِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَنٰكِبُوْنَ ﴿۷۴﴾[61]

The straight path towards which the Prophet (sws) is calling people leads them to their actual destination but to adopt this path faith in the hereafter is needed. If they do not have this faith, why would they impose conditions and restrictions on their wants and desires? Only those people can sacrifice the near at hand pleasures of this life who are waiting for a day of reward. Those who have no such inclination will continue to follow their desires even if this takes them far away from the straight path.

This verse explains to the Prophet (sws) that it is not because the way to salvation

60. Are you asking for some payment from them? The reward of your Lord is better for you and He is the best provider of sustenance.

61. And indeed, you are calling them to a straight path. And those who do not believe in the Hereafter have gone astray from the straight path.

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preached by him has any confusion or doubt for these people because of which they are evading it; it is the absolute straight path; the problem lies in their hearts. They do not have belief in the hereafter and those who do not have this belief are bound to go astray. This aspect of the philosophy of religion should be understood that if this world is not understood to culminate in another, it will appear as most complex and incomprehensible. No one will be able to rightly navigate it. This fact has been alluded to at various instances in this exegesis.

وَلَوْ رَحِمْنٰهُمْ وَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِمْ مِّنْ ضُرٍّ لَّلَجُّوْا فِيْ طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾[62]

A part of the conditional clause stated in this verse is suppressed in accordance with linguistic principles. If this suppression is unfolded, the complete sentence would be: "If for the purpose of admonition We made them pass through a trial so that fear Me and then showed mercy to them by delivering them from this trial, they would have again taken to their rebelliousness and wandered about." The implication is that for people of this mentality, the signs of punishment which they demand are of no avail. If ever they show submission, it is temporary. As soon as their days of trial pass, their leaders try to convince them that such circumstances befall nations and have nothing to do with their beliefs or characters.

At the same time, the Prophet (sws) is assured that if these people demand a sign of punishment, he should ignore them. No sign can be of benefit to such people.

وَلَقَدْ اَخَذْنٰهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ فَمَا اسْتَكَانُوْا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَمَا يَتَضَرَّعُوْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾[63]

This verse cites the reasoning in the light of history for what is stated in the previous verse: the past bears witness that people of this nature never learn a lesson from warnings. The implication is that if these people are warned too, the Prophet (sws) should not expect that they will mend their ways. The antecedent of the pronoun هُمْ is the not the Quraysh; it is the people of the previous nations who behaved similarly. It is common in Arabic for such pronouns to occur. Examples of this occur both in the Qur'ān and classical Arabic literature. The eloquence in it is that seizing one is like seizing the other because both are guilty of the same crime.

The difference between اسْتَكَانَة and تَضَرُّعُ is that of the intrinsic and the extrinsic. The former signifies the humility of the heart and the latter refers to the wailing and crying that manifest itself as a result of the former. In my opinion, an incomplete verb is suppressed before يَتَضَرَّعُوْنَ.

62. [And if after inflicting them with a trial, We] had showed mercy to them and eliminated their hardship, they would have continued to wander about like while being adamant on their rebelliousness.

63. And We seized in torment those who were like them, but neither did they bow to their Lord nor did they plead.

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حَتّٰٓى اِذَا فَتَحۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ بَابًا ذَا عَذَابٍ شَدِيۡدٍ اِذَا هُمۡ فِيۡهِ مُبۡلِسُوۡنَ ﴿۷۷﴾[64]

The implication of this verse is that these rebukes and warnings will not make them mend their ways until the time arrives when God will send down His harsh torment. This torment refers to the decisive punishment which according to the established practice of God visits every nation that denied its messenger even after the truth had been conclusively conveyed to it and it continued to stubbornly adhere to this denial. This practice of God has been explained at various instances in this exegesis. Once this punishment arrives, not much respite is given to such a nation. All its hopes and supports end, as is indicated in the last part of the verse.

وَهُوَ الَّذِىۡۤ اَنۡشَاَ لَـكُمُ السَّمۡعَ وَالۡاَبۡصَارَ وَالۡاَفۡـِٕدَةَ ؕ قَلِيۡلًا مَّا تَشۡكُرُوۡنَ ﴿۷۸﴾[65]

The earlier discourse was addressed to Prophet Muḥammad (sws) and the warning and threat it had for the Quraysh was in an indirect way. Now they are directly addressed. These faculties have been granted to them so that their ears hear the words of counsel and wisdom being narrated to them, their eyes are able to observe God's signs in the world within and around them and their hearts can reflect on the consequences that emanate from these and which are being very clearly presented to them. This only is the proper use of the ears, eyes and hearts but such is their misfortune that instead of asking for proofs for the truth, they are asking for the lash of punishment. In other words, if instead of seeking guidance from intellect and reason, people only spring into action when forced by a whip, then what is the difference between them and animals?

The words "yet, very seldom are you grateful" express yearning and sorrow. The foundation of gratitude is acknowledgement of favours and acknowledgement of favours means that a person tries to truly benefit from it and be grateful to the provider of these favours.

وَهُوَ الَّذِىۡ ذَرَاَكُمۡ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَاِلَيۡهِ تُحۡشَرُوۡنَ ﴿۷۹﴾[66]

Attention is directed here to the Day of Judgement: they should not remain under the misconception that they will die and decay in the earth nothing will happen after that. When a farmer sows seeds in his field, the purpose is to harvest the crop that will emerge. In a similar way, He Who has scattered people in the earth, will gather them one day and people should remember that they will only be gathered at His place. How can someone else share his harvested crop? Reflection shows that in a few words

64. Until when We open the door of a harsh torment to them, they have will totally lose hope in it.
65. And it is He Who has made for you ears, eyes and hearts. Yet, very seldom are you grateful.
66. And it is He Who has scattered you in the earth; then you will be gathered towards Him.

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the possibility and need of the Day of Judgement as well as argument in favour of monotheism is also stated.

وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ یُحْیٖ وَیُمِیْتُ وَلَهُ اخْتِلَافُ الَّیْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۸۰﴾[67]

The expression اخْتِلَافُ الَّیْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ means the coming of the day and night one after the other with amazing punctuality. The Qur'ān has directed attention to this sign at many instances.

This coming of the day and night with such precision in timing shows that this universe is subjected to the laws of God and the night had day do not have any authority of their own. The fact that none else can interfere in their passage shows that in reality only the peerless God controls them.

In spite of being fundamentally different in nature from one another, there exists complete harmony between the night and day. This is ample testimony to the fact that only one intent controls this universe – intent that is all powerful and all wise. It creates harmony among its conflicting elements and uses them for the collective good of this universe.

Getting up in the morning after a comfortable night's sleep is a reminder of the hereafter for every person: in a very similar way, the Almighty will awaken people from their slumber in Barzakh whenever He intends.

Besides the above inferences, there are others also which the Qur'ān has presented in the wake of the alternation of night and day, and I have tried to explain them in this exegesis.

بَلْ قَالُوْا مِثْلَ مَا قَالَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾ قَالُوْٓا ءَاِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّعِظَامًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبْعُوْثُوْنَ ﴿۸۲﴾ لَقَدْ وُعِدْنَا نَحْنُ وَاٰبَآؤُنَا هٰذَا مِنْ قَبْلُ اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اَسَاطِیْرُ الْاَوَّلِیْنَ ﴿۸۳﴾[68]

The implication of these verses is that all that is said above is clear and obvious but such is their misfortune and such is their senseless stance that they regard all this as fables of the past that mean nothing and say precisely what their predecessors had said.

قُلْ لِّمَنِ الْاَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِیْهَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۸۴﴾ سَیَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۸۵﴾[69]

This verse points to the contradictory views of these disbelievers: on the one hand,

67. And it is He Who gives life and death and in His control is the alternation of the night and the day. Then do you not understand?

68. In fact, they have said the same thing what their predecessors had said. They say: "When we die and become clay and bones, will we be raised to life again? We and before us our forefathers too were threatened of it. These are only tales of the ancient."

69. Ask them: To whom belongs this earth and those in it, if you know? They will reply: "To God." Say: So, do you not receive a reminder from it?

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they regard God to be the creator and owner of the heavens and the earth as well as One Who has sole authority, and on the other hand, either say things that are entirely opposite to this view or reject the necessary consequences of it. It has been explained at appropriate instances in this exegesis that the Idolaters of Arabia regarded God to be the creator and owner and the sole controller of the heavens and in the earth. However, at the same time, they were inflicted with all sorts of polytheistic practices alluded to at various places in this exegesis. As for the Day of Judgement, they, in the first place regarded it to be very improbable and if they did believe in it hypothetically, they thought that their intercessors would save them from God's punishment. A little deliberation shows that today's Muslims are also inflicted with similar contradictory views. They acknowledge God but at the same time reject its necessary consequences. They stake claim to faith but blatantly say and do what is exactly opposite to it.

The words "if you know" are a type of sarcastic remark on their contradictory view. This is because knowledge which is an amalgam of contradictions is actually extreme ignorance. If they believe that all these objects and entities of the universe are under God's sole control, why don't they revisit their views and beliefs? How can they deny monotheism after this? From where have they fabricated these deities and intercessors? Why do they regard the Day of Judgement to be a weird happening? Why do they show such aversion to the preaching of the messenger?

قُلْ مَنْ رَّبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٨٦﴾ سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾[70]

The expression "glorious throne" signifies God's absolute authority. Just as the people of Arabia regarded God to be the creator and owner of the earth, they also regarded Him to be the owner of the seven heavens and the sole authority of the universe. Like other idolatrous nations of the world, they never regarded the heavens and the earth to have separate deities. The verse states that if these people reply that it is God Who is the creator of the heavens and the earth, the Prophet (sws) should ask them as to why they do not fear Him if they create disruption and disorder in His system. If His punishment visits them because they do not obey His directives and laws and associate partners with Him without any justification, who can stop Him from doing so?

قُلْ مَنْۢ بِيَدِهٖ مَلَكُوْتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّهُوَ يُجِيْرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ فَاَنّٰى تُسْحَرُوْنَ ﴿٨٩﴾[71]

The word مَلَكُوْت here means "the reins of authority." The polytheists of Arabia

70. Ask: Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and the glorious throne? They will say: "All these belong to God." Say: So, do you not fear this God?

71. Ask: Who is it that has authority over everything and He gives refuge but no one other than Him can give refuge, if you know? They will say: "All this is God's authority alone." Say: Then where do you lose your senses?

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worshipped various idols. However, they never thought that these idols have such authority as to save them from God's punishment. In fact, they worshipped angels by regarding them to be daughters of God because they thought that making them happy means that God will be happy with them. The words "if you know" imply that in the mythology they themselves have fashioned, they have not given this status to anyone; but if here is someone and they know and believe in him, they should name him. It is then stated that if these people do not regard anyone besides God to have reins of authority, then the Prophet (sws) should ask them who has weaved this spell of magic on them that has made them lose their senses and they are invoking others besides God.

بَلْ اَتَيْنٰهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿۹۰﴾ مَا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ وَّلَدٍ وَّ مَا كَانَ مَعَهٗ مِنْ اِلٰهٍ اِذًا لَّذَهَبَ كُلُّ اِلٰهٍۢ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَ لَعَلَا بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ؕ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ ﴿۹۱﴾ عٰلِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَ الشَّهَادَةِ فَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۹۲﴾[72]

A concluding comment is made in these verses on the questions and answers cited earlier. What they believe in contradicts their acknowledgements. For this reason, what God has presented in this Qur'ān is the absolute truth and they are absolute liars because they are denying their own beliefs by their very tongues. Had there been other partners of God, this universe would have been disbanded ages ago for the reason stated.

We are aware of the sanguine battles of the gods in Greek and Hindu mythologies. The Greeks believed that man was created by the sun and woman by the earth. Imagine if the sun took away the men created by it, what would have happened to the women of the earth? The Qur'ān has directed attention to the fact that this universe is intact because it has only one creator and master who is governing it. If there were others who shared this governance, it would have been impossible to keep it intact.

Section V: Verses (93-118)

Coming up are the concluding verses of the *sūrah*. The Prophet (sws) is given glad tidings that the time of God's help and triumph over his enemies is near. The believers will succeed and the Prophet's enemies will face humiliation both in this world and in the next. The Prophet (sws) is urged to ignore their pranks for some more time since their fate is about to be decided. As soon as they meet this fate, they will realize that the respite they were regarding to be a lengthy one and as a result became more

72. In fact, We have brought the truth to them and they are absolute liars. God has not made anyone His offspring; and neither is there any other deity besides Him. If such was the case, each deity would have taken his creation and walked away, and would have attacked another. Exalted is God from such things they state. He knows the manifest and the hidden. And far aloft is He from what they associate with Him.

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audacious to play their pranks, has passed in the blink of an eye. At that time, they will severely regret what they had done.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in this background.

Text and Translation

قُلْ رَّبِّ اِمَّا تُرِيَنِّيْ مَا يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾ رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِيْ فِي الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَاِنَّا عَلٰٓى اَنْ نُّرِيَكَ مَا
نَعِدُهُمْ لَقٰدِرُوْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾ اِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةَ ؕ نَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُوْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اَعُوْذُ بِكَ مِنْ
هَمَزٰتِ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ ﴿٩٧﴾ وَاَعُوْذُ بِكَ رَبِّ اَنْ يَّحْضُرُوْنِ ﴿٩٨﴾ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءَ اَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُوْنِ ﴿٩٩﴾
لَعَلِّيْٓ اَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيْمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا ؕ اِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَآئِلُهَا ؕ وَمِنْ وَّرَآئِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ اِلٰى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾
فَاِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّوْرِ فَلَآ اَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَّ لَا يَتَسَآءَلُوْنَ ﴿١٠١﴾ فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ تَلْفَحُ وُجُوْهَهُمُ
النَّارُ وَهُمْ فِيْهَا كٰلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ اَلَمْ تَكُنْ اٰيٰتِيْ تُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُوْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا
شِقْوَتُنَا وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَآلِّيْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ رَبَّنَآ اَخْرِجْنَا مِنْهَا فَاِنْ عُدْنَا فَاِنَّا ظٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ قَالَ اخْسَـُٔوْا فِيْهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُوْنِ ﴿١٠٨﴾
اِنَّهٗ كَانَ فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ اٰمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ فَاتَّخَذْتُمُوْهُمْ سِخْرِيًّا
حَتّٰٓى اَنْسَوْكُمْ ذِكْرِيْ وَكُنْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ تَضْحَكُوْنَ ﴿١١٠﴾ اِنِّيْ جَزَيْتُهُمُ الْيَوْمَ بِمَا صَبَرُوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُوْنَ ﴿١١١﴾ قٰلَ كَمْ
لَبِثْتُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ عَدَدَ سِنِيْنَ ﴿١١٢﴾ قَالُوْا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا اَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ فَسْـَٔلِ الْعَآدِّيْنَ ﴿١١٣﴾ قٰلَ اِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا لَّوْ
اَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١١٤﴾ اَفَحَسِبْتُمْ اَنَّمَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ عَبَثًا وَّ اَنَّكُمْ اِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿١١٥﴾ فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ الْمَلِكُ
الْحَقُّ ۚ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيْمِ ﴿١١٦﴾ وَمَنْ يَّدْعُ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ ۙ لَا بُرْهَانَ لَهٗ بِهٖ ۙ فَاِنَّمَا حِسَابُهٗ
عِنْدَ رَبِّهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ وَاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾

Pray: My Lord! If you show me the torment with which they are being threatened, Lord! do not include me among these unjust people. And, indeed, We are capable of showing you the torment with which We are threatening them. (93-95)

Gracefully ignore their pranks. We are fully aware of whatever evil they are uttering. And keep praying: Lord! I seek your refuge from the prompting of the devils and my Lord! I seek your refuge that they come to me. (96-98)

Until when the death of any of them hovers over, he will say: "Lord! Send me back

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that I may earn good deeds in what I have left behind." Certainly not! This is merely a statement that he is uttering. And in front of them will be a barrier until that Day when they will be raised. Then when the trumpet is sounded, neither will mutual relationships avail them that Day nor will they be able to seek help from one another. Thus those whose scales are heavy shall only succeed and those whose scales are light, it is they who have put themselves in loss. They shall forever remain in Hell. Fire shall burn down their faces and in it their faces shall be distorted. Were not My revelations read out to you; then you would deny them? They will say: "Our Lord! Our misfortune had enveloped us and we remained astray. Our Lord! Take us out just once from this Hell; after that if we still repeat what we did, we shall indeed be among the unjust." It shall be ordered: "Be off with you! Remain in it and do not talk to Me." There was a group among My servants who would pray: "Our Lord! We have professed faith; so, forgive us and have mercy on us and you are best of those who show mercy." So, you made fun of them until this pleasantry of yours made you forget My remembrance and you continued to ridicule them. Today, I have rewarded them for their perseverance so that it is they only who have succeeded. (99-111)

One who says will say: "By the count of years, how long would you have stayed on earth?" They will reply: "A day or a part of the day; but you ask this to those who have kept count." One who says will say: "You only stayed for a short while. Would that you knew!" (112-114)

Then, do you think that We have created you without a purpose and you will not be returned to Us? So, very exalted is God, the real sovereign. None is a deity except Him; Master of the glorious throne. And anyone who invokes some other deity with God about which he has no evidence, his account rests with his Lord. And the disbelievers shall never succeed. And pray: Lord! Forgive me and have mercy on me; you are the best of those who show mercy. (115-118)

Translation

قُلْ رَّبِّ اِمَّا تُرِيَنِّیْ مَا یُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿۹۳﴾ رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِیْ فِی الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِیْنَ ﴿۹۴﴾[73]

When the Quraysh would be threatened of the punishment that visits a nation that denies its messenger, they would ask the Prophet (sws) to bring it if he was truthful. The Qur'ān has responded to this demand at a number of places. For example, in verse 46 of Sūrah Yūnus, it is said: وَاِمَّا نُرِیَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِیْ نَعِدُهُمْ اَوْ نَتَوَفَّیَنَّكَ فَاِلَیْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ (We shall either show you a part of that torment or give death to you and their return will be to Us). Similarly, in verse 40 of Sūrah al-Ra'd, it is stated: وَاِنْ مَّا نُرِیَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِیْ نَعِدُهُمْ اَوْ نَتَوَفَّیَنَّكَ فَاِنَّمَا عَلَیْكَ الْبَلٰغُ وَ عَلَیْنَا الْحِسَابُ (And We shall show you some part of the torment We are informing them of and give you death and your responsibility is only to communicate;

73. Pray: My Lord! If you show me the torment with which they are being threatened, Lord! do not include me among these unjust people.

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taking account is Our responsibility). The same subject is discussed in verse 77 of Sūrah al-Mu'min too. It is evident from these verses that as far as the promise of punishment for the disbelievers is concerned, it is an absolute reality. The question whether it will appear in the life of the Prophet (sws) or after him has been left vague in these verses. However, the verse under discussion is referring to the fact that the time of conquest and dominance for him and his followers is very near. It will come within his life. The necessary consequence of this is destruction of his enemies. This is evident from the fact that the verse urges the Prophet (sws) to pray that if the promised doom would visit these unjust people in his lifetime, God should protect him. The glad tidings found in this prayer for the Prophet (sws) and the warning for his enemies are fully evident. It is also a historical fact that his enemies were totally routed in his lifetime and when he left this world, he left it with the declaration: truth has arrived and evil has perished (جَآءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ).

وَاِنَّا عَلٰٓى اَنْ نُّرِيَكَ مَا نَعِدُهُمْ لَقٰدِرُوْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾[74]

These words emphasize the glad tidings mentioned in the previous verse. The reason was that by that time circumstances were still very adverse. The Prophet (sws) and his companions were being forced to migrate from Makkah, as a result of the wave persecution let lose by his enemies. It was not easy at all to imagine at that time that light would soon make this darkness vanish. It was in order to do away with this uncertainty that the words of this verse sound assurance to the Prophet (sws). They unequivocally let him know that circumstances can never impede God's intent.

Urging the Prophet (sws) to pray in these words does not merely show the intensity of the torment, as has been generally understood. It also insinuates migration requesting God to open this way for them in case this torment was due to come in his own life. In other words, he has been given glad tidings in the form of a prayer that God has already made arrangements of protecting him from this torment.

اِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةَ ۭ نَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُوْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾[75]

These words urge the Prophet (sws) to show patience and forgive and ignore his opponents. He should continue to respond to their ill-ways in a magnanimous way. He should not be sad at their taunts and harassment. God will take them to task for every single mischief they are working. He should consign their matter to Him. The time of the decision is at hand.

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74. And, indeed, We are capable of showing you the torment with which We are threatening them.

75. Gracefully ignore their pranks. We are fully aware of whatever evil they are uttering.

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وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اَعُوْذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزٰتِ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ ﴿۹۷﴾ وَ اَعُوْذُ بِكَ رَبِّ اَنْ يَّحْضُرُوْنِ ﴿۹۸﴾[76]

These words teach him the prayer to acquire patience for himself and the strength to forgive his enemies. The word الشَّيٰطِيْنِ refer to devils both the jinn who whisper evil suggestions in the heart of people and also those among human beings whose attitude is under discussion here.

حَتّٰۤى اِذَا جَآءَ اَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُوْنِ ﴿۹۹﴾ لَعَلِّيْۤ اَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيْمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا ؕ اِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَآئِلُهَا ؕ وَمِنْ وَّرَآئِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ اِلٰى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۰﴾[77]

The implication of this verse is that these people are not going to abstain from mischief-mongering until death overtakes any of them. They will only be awakened from their slumber when they face the new circumstances of the next world. At that time, they will earnestly utter what is stated in these verses. Alas, their request to be sent back would merely turn out to be an expression of regret and will not the slightest avail them. The time of action for them will stand expired for it is restricted to the previous world only. As soon as they pass away from this world, they will face a barrier which will only be lifted once they will be raised to life on the Day of Judgement for accountability. The words اِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَآئِلُهَا can also mean that this person may utter these words but if he is sent back, he will continue to do what he did earlier. There are parallel verses in the Qur'ān that support this interpretation. However, in my opinion, the interpretation I have adopted is the correct one. Very evident examples of this are found in the *sūrahs* of the last chapter.

فَاِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّوْرِ فَلَاۤ اَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَّ لَا يَتَسَآءَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۱﴾[78]

This is a portrayal of the extent each person will be involved in his own affairs. No familial ties or relationship will be of any avail nor will they have the time to even seek help. The word تَسَاءُل here means "to seek mutual help from one another." The biggest support a person can have in this world at time of adversity is his family and tribe. For the Arabs, this support had a special significance. Whenever a person in hardship would call out for help, every member of the tribe would offer this help even if it meant sacrificing his life.

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76. And keep praying: Lord! I seek your refuge from the prompting of the devils and my Lord! I seek your refuge that they come to me.

77. Until when the death of any of them hovers over, he will say: "Lord! Send me back that I may earn good deeds in what I have left behind." Certainly not! This is merely a statement that he is uttering. And in front of them will be a barrier until that Day when they will be raised.

78. Then when the trumpet is sounded, neither will mutual relationships avail them that Day nor will they be able to seek help from one another.

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فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَ مَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ تَلْفَحُ وُجُوْهَهُمُ النَّارُ وَهُمْ فِيْهَا كٰلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٠٤﴾[79]

On that day, only deeds – and not relationships – will be any avail.*****

اَلَمْ تَكُنْ اٰيٰتِيْ تُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُوْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا شِقْوَتُنَا وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَآلِّيْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ رَبَّنَآ اَخْرِجْنَا مِنْهَا فَاِنْ عُدْنَا فَاِنَّا ظٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٠٧﴾[80]

The first of these verses expresses the response of God when these people would wail and cry. Thereafter their confession and request are cited.*****

قَالَ اخْسَـُٔوْا فِيْهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُوْنِ ﴿١٠٨﴾[81]

The word خَسَأَ expresses disgracefully dismissing someone from one's presence.

اِنَّهٗ كَانَ فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ اٰمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ فَاتَّخَذْتُمُوْهُمْ سِخْرِيًّا حَتّٰٓى اَنْسَوْكُمْ ذِكْرِيْ وَكُنْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ تَضْحَكُوْنَ ﴿١١٠﴾ اِنِّيْ جَزَيْتُهُمُ الْيَوْمَ بِمَا صَبَرُوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُوْنَ ﴿١١١﴾[82]

These verses are an expression of self-pride and honour because of which God – so prone to honour – will stop these mean people to utter any further words.

The word "group" in "a group among My servants" indicates that here specially the poor Muslims are being referred to. It was because of their poverty and helplessness that the arrogant Quraysh were persecuting and ridiculing them. They would make fun of the invocation and prayer of mercy uttered by these impoverished Muslims. The word سِخْرِيٌّ means "the thing or the person who is made fun of." Mocking at someone is an expression of arrogance; however, if someone's prayer is mocked at, then this

79. Thus those whose scales are heavy shall only succeed and those whose scales are light, it is they who have put themselves in loss. They shall forever remain in Hell. Fire shall burn down their faces and in it their faces shall be distorted.

80. Were not My revelations read out to you; then you would deny them? They will say: "Our Lord! Our misfortune had enveloped us and we remained astray. Our Lord! Take us out just once from this Hell; after that if we still repeat what we did, we shall indeed be among the unjust."

81. It shall be ordered: "Be off with you! Remain in it and do not talk to Me."

82. There was a group among My servants who would pray: "Our Lord! We have professed faith; so, forgive us and have mercy on us and you are best of those who show mercy." So, you made fun of them until this pleasantry of yours made you forget My remembrance and you continued to ridicule them. Today, I have rewarded them for their perseverance so that it is they only who have succeeded.

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arrogance is enhanced several times. It is tantamount to making fun of God Himself.

The words "until this pleasantry of yours made you forget My remembrance" refer to the fact that such was the extent of their jest and mockery that they did not get the time to think that God was fully watching their misdeeds with His patient and grateful servants; one day, He will definitely take revenge for each and every act of misdemeanour they committed.

The last verse urges them to now open their eyes to the reality: they are right now facing what they had made themselves forget. In spite of the wave of persecution and oppression, mockery and ridicule let lose by them, servants of God who adhered to His servitude. Today they shall be fully rewarded for their perseverance and it is they who shall achieve really success. Here readers may keep in mind the opening verses of the *sūrah*: "those believers succeeded who show humility in their prayer." It is ending on the same note with which it began. This style of *'awd 'alā al-bad'* (return to the beginning) is found at many instances in the Qur'ān, and is among the most prominent proofs of coherence in the Qur'ān.

How much have these verses impacted the poor among the Muslims who in those times were being oppressed and persecuted! How much they must have been comforted and strengthened at these words of affection by their honourable God.

قٰلَ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ عَدَدَ سِنِيْنَ ﴿١١٢﴾ قَالُوْا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا اَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ فَسْـَٔلِ الْعَآدِّيْنَ ﴿١١٣﴾ قٰلَ اِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا لَّوْ اَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١١٤﴾[83]

These verses imply that soon their misconception about the delay in the Day of Judgement will be dispelled, and the life they thought was a long one would end in the blink of an eye.

The word قٰلَ will not be uttered by God or by an angel, as has been generally understood. It is actually in the sense of قال قائل (a speaker will speak). The words "but you ask this to those who have kept count" actually express aversion of the responders. The implication is that even a question about the life with which they are so enamoured today and whose longevity has infatuated them will be utterly disliked by them. The words "You only stayed for a short while. Would that you knew" will also be spoken from someone among them. It carries rebuke and longing. What is implied is that they stayed in the world for a short while but the time for this comprehension has now passed.

This topic is also discussed in verses 102-104 of Sūrah Ṭāhā. There it specified that this conversation will take place among them:

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83. One who says will say: "By the count of years, how long would you have stayed on earth?" They will reply: "A day or a part of the day; but you ask this to those who have kept count." One who says will say: "You only stayed for a short while. Would that you knew!"

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يَّتَخَافَتُوْنَ بَيْنَهُمْ اِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ اِلَّا عَشْرًا نَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِذْ يَقُوْلُ اَمْثَلُهُمْ طَرِيْقَةً اِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ اِلَّا يَوْمًا

They will whisper to one another: "You have remained for only ten days in this world." We very well know what they will say when he who they regard among them to be the most capable in estimating will say: "You have not remained for more than a day." (20:102-104)

That this conversation will take place among them is also evident from verse 19 of Sūrah al-Kahf. There a dialogue is cited between the companions of the cave. As explained there, it is actually an example of how people will be awaked one day from the sleep in Barzakh.

It is a fact that it is only as long as a person is living that he thinks that he will keep living. Once it passes, it becomes a dream of the past.

اَفَحَسِبْتُمْ اَنَّمَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ عَبَثًا وَّاَنَّكُمْ اِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۵﴾[84]

The implication is that very wrong is their notion that they will not be returned to their Lord and not be held accountable for their deeds.

فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۚ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيْمِ ﴿۱۱۶﴾[85]

This is a reminder of God's attributes in order to dispel the misconception of the Idolaters regarding reward and punishment. It is beyond God to do something without purpose and create something for His amusement in this manner. Since He is the real sovereign, how can it be possible that He does not administer justice between His servants and equate the oppressor and the oppressed? If there is no deity like Him, then no one should mislead himself by thinking that he can save himself from God's grasp through any intercession. The word "throne" signifies God's governance and the word "glorious" signifies His honour and benevolence. The implication is that how can the governance of the benevolent and honourable God be purposeless.

وَمَنْ يَّدْعُ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ ۙ لَا بُرْهَانَ لَهٗ بِهٖ ۙ فَاِنَّمَا حِسَابُهٗ عِنْدَ رَبِّهٖ ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۷﴾[86]

These words further explain the subject of monotheism discussed earlier. In other

84. Then, do you think that We have created you without a purpose and you will not be returned to Us?

85. So, very exalted is God, the real sovereign. None is a deity except Him; Master of the glorious throne.

86. And anyone who invokes some other deity with God about which he has no evidence, his account rests with his Lord. And the disbelievers shall never succeed.

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words, those who associate partners with God are disbelievers and such disbelievers never succeed.

The *sūrah* began with the words "Those believers succeeded who …" and is ending on the words "the disbelievers shall never succeed."

وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ وَاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۸﴾[87]

Here, at the end, the companions of the Prophet (sws) are urged through him to seek God's forgiveness and mercy. Deliberation shows that it is the same prayer which is referred to in verse 109 and which was made fun of by the disbelievers. It is evident from being advised to pray thus that the Prophet (sws) was to adhere to his stance and keep praying as told. It would open the doors of forgiveness and mercy for him. It is a glad tiding of victory and God's help in the garb of a prayer for the believers.

With these words, the exegesis of this sūrah stands completed. اللّٰهُم اغْفِرْ وَ ارْحَمْ وَ اَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ (Lord! Forgive me and have mercy on me; you are the best of those who show mercy).

Raḥmānābād
10th August 1973

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87. And pray: Lord! Forgive me and have mercy on me; you are the best of those who show mercy.

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Sūrah al-Nūr (24)

Placement, Theme and Relationship with the Previous Sūrah

This is the last *sūrah* of the third chapter. It was revealed in Madīnah. It does not have a counterpart and is like a supplement and appendix to Sūrah al-Mu'minūn, the previous *sūrah*. I have explained in the foreword of this exegesis that a *sūrah* which is a supplement and appendix to the previous one is in fact a part of it, and for this reason does not need a counterpart. Examples of such *sūrahs* can be seen later as well.

Readers may well look up the first eleven verses of Sūrah al-Mu'minūn. It has been stated in them that salvation and success before God is reserved for those believers whose prayers are marked with humility and concentration, who abstain from frivolous activities, who pay *zakāh*, guard their private parts and control their sexual desires and do not cross limits by being overwhelmed by them, who are honest in what is entrusted to them and abide by their word.

As long as the Muslims lived in Makkah, these consequences of faith could only have found expression in their individual lives because there was no collective system in place. However, after migration when they assembled in Madīnah under a political and collective set-up, time was ripe that these consequences of faith also find expression in their social and political spheres. Thus at the very pace in which circumstances became conducive, directives related to their collected reformation and purification were also revealed. Thereby, this radiance of faith that was hitherto confined to their individual lives now extended to their collective lives also.

Sūrah al-Nūr is a *sūrah* that reflects this scenario. Through it, the believers, in accordance with the specific circumstances of those times, are informed of directives which can set right the collective affairs of their society and which were necessary to protect them for the consequences that conflicted with their faith.

Following is the analysis of the meanings of the *sūrah* so that the correspondence of its components with its theme becomes evident.

Analysis of Meanings

Verses (1-3): The punishment of fornication is mentioned, and the prohibition for a Muslim to marry an idolater or a someone guilty of fornication is stated.

Verses (4-5): The punishment of accusing someone of fornication and the law of evidence related to prove this crime is referred to.

Verses (6-10): If a person accuses his wife of adultery and is not able to present the

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evidence prescribed by the *sharī'ah*, then the matter will be decided through oaths. This methodology is then explained.

Verses (11-26): The mischief worked by the hypocrites in the incident of *ifk* is briefly referred to. Appropriate directives are given to curb such a disruption. These hypocrites are exposed and warned. Muslims who showed carelessness and negligence in this matter and thereby inadvertently strengthened the propaganda worked by the hypocrites are also warned to be on guard from them in future. These hypocrites are after damaging the moral reputation of the Muslims. Hence it is not allowed for them to believe in whatever they whisper in their ears to cause this harm. On the contrary, they must give allowance to their fellow Muslims. They must not believe any such accusation unless there is a solid proof in its favour.

Verses (27-31): If Muslims needs to visit in other Muslims in their houses, they must abide by certain decorum so that the eyes are restrained from taking undue liberty and Satan is not afforded with any opportunity to make hey. This decorum is explained and the religious restrictions imposed in this situation on women present in the houses are elucidated.

Verses (32-34): It is emphasized that widows and widowers of the society should be married off. A similar directive is given regarding slave-men and slave-women. The purpose is to promote purity in the society. The directive of *mukātabat* is given to eradicate the institution of slavery and bring slave-men and slave-women at par with the free men and women. It is stressed upon Muslims to financially help slave-men and slave-women who want to undertake *mukātabat.* People are emphatically asked to refrain from forcing their slave-women into prostitution.

Verses (35-40): A parable of belief and disbelief is stated. It is explained that hearts which have faith in them shine both inwardly and outwardly. On the other hand, those people who are deprived of the radiance of faith are engulfed by pitch darkness both inwardly and outwardly.

Verses (41-46): People are invited to profess faith by presenting to them signs from the world around them. Only God, the one and only, is controlling this universe. Everything is glorifying and praising Him alone. Thus it is the obligation of human beings also that they profess faith in the one and only God, and not make themselves worthy of His anger by associating others in His worship and obedience.

Verses (47-54): Opponents of the Prophet (sws) would agree with him if something was in their interest and if this was not the case they would leave aside God and His Prophet (sws) and do what they like. They are warned that they cannot divide their loyalties in this way for long now. If they want to achieve success in this world and the next, they should devotedly support him only; otherwise, they can wander here and there. God does not care about them. They should also remember that the real thing is faith and obedience. They should not try to swear false oaths and deceive the Prophet (sws). His responsibility is to convey God's religion which he has done. It is now left to people and each of them must contemplate his fate.

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Verses (55-57): The righteous companions of God's messenger are given unequivocal glad tidings of political authority in the land. They are told that their rivals and foes of their religion cannot the slightest harm their religion. They should continue to be diligent in the prayer, pay *zakāh* and strongly adhere to the obedience of the Prophet (sws). Soon the time will come when God will replace the current state of fear with peace and security.

Verses (58-61): Earlier in verses 27-31, directives related to gender interaction were given. Later some questions arose about them. The current verses answer them and it is also explained that these verses were revealed after answers were given to these questions.

Verses (62-64): These are the concluding verses of the *sūrah*. After the elucidatory verses, the discourse returns to the topic of obedience to the Prophet (sws) mentioned earlier in verse 57. This grand *sūrah* also ends on this topic. In these concluding verses, Muslims are warned in general and the Hypocrites in particular. They are told that when God's messenger calls them for some collective task, they must not regard his call to be the call of an ordinary person so that they may or may not respond to it. They have to respond to his call come what may and unless given permission, they must not leave his presence. Their success in this life and the next depends on this obedience.

The relationship of the components of the *sūrah* with its theme has become fully evident from this analysis. I now begin in God's name its explanation.

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Section I: Verses (1-10)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

سُوۡرَۃٌ اَنۡزَلۡنٰہَا وَ فَرَضۡنٰہَا وَ اَنۡزَلۡنَا فِیۡہَاۤ اٰیٰتٍۭ بَیِّنٰتٍ لَّعَلَّکُمۡ تَذَکَّرُوۡنَ ﴿۱﴾ اَلزَّانِیَۃُ وَ الزَّانِیۡ فَاجۡلِدُوۡا کُلَّ وَاحِدٍ
مِّنۡہُمَا مِائَۃَ جَلۡدَۃٍ ۫ وَّ لَا تَاۡخُذۡکُمۡ بِہِمَا رَاۡفَۃٌ فِیۡ دِیۡنِ اللّٰہِ اِنۡ کُنۡتُمۡ تُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِاللّٰہِ وَ الۡیَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ ۚ وَ لۡیَشۡہَدۡ
عَذَابَہُمَا طَآئِفَۃٌ مِّنَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ ﴿۲﴾ اَلزَّانِیۡ لَا یَنۡکِحُ اِلَّا زَانِیَۃً اَوۡ مُشۡرِکَۃً ۫ وَّ الزَّانِیَۃُ لَا یَنۡکِحُہَاۤ اِلَّا زَانٍ اَوۡ
مُشۡرِکٌ ۚ وَ حُرِّمَ ذٰلِکَ عَلَی الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ ﴿۳﴾ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ یَرۡمُوۡنَ الۡمُحۡصَنٰتِ ثُمَّ لَمۡ یَاۡتُوۡا بِاَرۡبَعَۃِ شُہَدَآءَ فَاجۡلِدُوۡہُمۡ
ثَمٰنِیۡنَ جَلۡدَۃً وَّ لَا تَقۡبَلُوۡا لَہُمۡ شَہَادَۃً اَبَدًا ۚ وَ اُولٰٓئِکَ ہُمُ الۡفٰسِقُوۡنَ ﴿۴﴾ۙ اِلَّا الَّذِیۡنَ تَابُوۡا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ ذٰلِکَ وَ
اَصۡلَحُوۡا ۚ فَاِنَّ اللّٰہَ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِیۡمٌ ﴿۵﴾ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ یَرۡمُوۡنَ اَزۡوَاجَہُمۡ وَ لَمۡ یَکُنۡ لَّہُمۡ شُہَدَآءُ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡفُسُہُمۡ فَشَہَادَۃُ
اَحَدِہِمۡ اَرۡبَعُ شَہٰدٰتٍۭ بِاللّٰہِ ۙ اِنَّہٗ لَمِنَ الصّٰدِقِیۡنَ ﴿۶﴾ وَ الۡخَامِسَۃُ اَنَّ لَعۡنَتَ اللّٰہِ عَلَیۡہِ اِنۡ کَانَ مِنَ الۡکٰذِبِیۡنَ ﴿۷﴾

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وَيَدْرَؤُا عَنْهَا الْعَذَابَ اَنْ تَشْهَدَ اَرْبَعَ شَهٰدٰتٍۭ بِاللّٰهِ ۙ اِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ۝ وَالْخَامِسَةَ اَنَّ غَضَبَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَآ اِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ۝ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ تَوَّابٌ حَكِيْمٌ ۝

Text and Translation

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

This is an important *sūrah* that We have revealed and have made its directives mandatory and have also revealed very clear admonitions in it so that you fully take heed. (1)

A man or a woman guilty of fornication, flog each of them with a hundred lashes, and in the implementation of God's law any feeling of sympathy with them should not arise in you, if you truly believe in God and in the Hereafter. And let a group of Muslims at the time of their punishment be present there. (2)

A man guilty of fornication should only marry a woman guilty of fornication or an idolatress. And a woman guilty of fornication should only be married by a man guilty of fornication or an idolater. And this has been prohibited to the believers. (3)

And those who accuse chaste women, then do not bring four witnesses to support their accusation, flog them with eighty lashes and never accept their testimony in future. It is these people who are the real defiant. Those who repent and reform after this, then God is Forgiving and Merciful. And those who accuse their wives and have no other witness except themselves, then the procedure of their testimony is that they should swear four times by God and say that they are truthful and the fifth time they should say that may the curse of God be on them if they were lying. And the punishment can be averted from the woman when she swears four times by God that this person is a liar and the fifth time she should say that may the wrath of God come upon her if he was truthful. And had not God's mercy and blessings been upon you and had it not been that God accepts repentance and is wise, you would have been seized by Him. (4-10)

Explanation

سُوْرَةٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهَا وَفَرَضْنٰهَا وَاَنْزَلْنَا فِيْهَآ اٰيٰتٍۭ بَيِّنٰتٍ لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ۝[1]

As indicated earlier, this *sūrah* is like a supplement and appendix to Sūrah al-Mu'minūn. For this reason it begins without any introductory part with an admonition. When an inchoative (*mubtadā'*) is suppressed, as is the case here, the purpose is to direct all attention to the enunciative (*khabar*). This further reflects the importance of the *sūrah.* The opening words imply that if God has revealed it, then people should

1. This is an important *sūrah* that We have revealed and have made its directives mandatory and have also revealed very clear admonitions in it so that you fully take heed.

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not regard it to be something trivial. It has to be obeyed come what may.

The words "and have made its directives mandatory" indicate the obligatory nature of the *sūrah's* directives. They must be followed without any hesitancy and negligence in any way.

The part "and have also revealed very clear admonitions in it so that you fully take heed" points to the admonitions found in the *sūrah* that are interspersed repeatedly in between the directives. Thus verses 1, 15, 17, 20, 24, 46 and 58 can be looked up. The common purpose of these admonitions is that people should follow these directives in letter and spirit; otherwise, they should remember that the punishment of God is very stern.

These admonitions were specially needed in this *sūrah* because the directives given in it about the family, society and crimes perpetrated by people proved to be pitfalls for previous nations because of which these nations earned God's wrath. It is a favour of God on this *ummah* that He besides giving these directives, He has also repeatedly informed it about the consequences of violating them so that people remain vigilant. The words "so that you fully take heed" refer to this.

اَلزَّانِيَةُ وَ الزَّانِیْ فَاجْلِدُوْا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ ۖ وَّ لَا تَاْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَاْفَةٌ فِیْ دِیْنِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْیَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ۚ وَلْیَشْهَدْ عَذَابَهُمَا طَآىِٕفَةٌ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ ۝[2]

Fornication plays the greatest role in spreading disorder and anarchy in a society. This is because its stability depends on the purity of blood relations and on their protection from every form of disruption. Fornication on the other hand destroys this purity and plunges a society into sexual disarray. The consequence of this is that a society is converted into a herd of animals. Since this disorder and disarray disrupts the society from its very roots, all divine religions regard fornication to be a punishable offence. In the very first phase, Islam too gave directives to stop this disorder from spreading. Thus verses 15-16 of Sūrah Nisā' mention the initial directives given in this regard when circumstances had not yet become conducive for the implementation of punishments in the society. At the same time, it indicated that final and ultimate directives in this regard will be revealed later. Thus in the verse under discussion this promise has been fulfilled, and a man and a woman guilty of this crime were to be flogged with a hundred lashes each.

The word دِیْنِ in وَّ لَا تَاْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَاْفَةٌ فِیْ دِیْنِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْیَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ refers to the punishment of fornication mentioned here. In other words, no lenience should be shown in the implementation of this punishment; softness should be shown to neither

2. A man or a woman guilty of fornication, flog each of them with a hundred lashes, and in the implementation of God's law any feeling of sympathy with them should not arise in you, if you truly believe in God and in the Hereafter. And let a group of Muslims at the time of their punishment be present there.

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a woman nor a man, to neither the rich nor the poor. The limits set by God should be observed without granting any alleviation or showing partiality, for this is a requirement of belief in God and in the Hereafter. The faith in God and in the Hereafter of those who show weakness in this regard cannot be trusted. A noteworthy point in the statement of this punishment is that the woman is mentioned before the man. One reason for this is that without a woman's consent, fornication cannot take place; secondly, there is a strong possibility that being the weaker sex, feelings of compassion may arise for her; the Qur'ān, therefore, has mentioned her before the man so that it becomes evident from the style of the verse that in the Almighty's eyes no lenience should be shown to either the woman or the man.

The reason to emphasize the implementation of punishments prescribed by God was because the Jews had practically done away with most of them. The punishment of fornication in their *sharī'ah* was stoning to death but in reality it was only given to the poor and the rich were spared. And in current times, it has become an established philosophy that people who perpetrate crimes are mentally sick; thus they deserve to be sympathized with and rehabilitated instead of being punished. As a consequence of this approach, God's earth has been filled with barbarians and ruffians who wreak havoc with the honour of decent and civilized people. Consider our own country. If the prescribed punishment of fornication is mentioned before those responsible of creating law and order, they will call these punishments to be barbaric in spite of staking tall claims to faith. If because of some contingency they do not call them so, in their hearts they will think that they are in fact barbaric. Such is the situation of our country that every year thousands of lives are lost and women are mercilessly raped by these savages. Newspapers are flooded by such heart wrenching news every day.

On the other hand, such is the sympathy these people have for thieves and those guilty of fornication that it is as if they have become more merciful to them than the Most Merciful God; merely imagining the punishments of flogging and amputation of hands makes them shudder. However, the irony is that no emotions of concern and sympathy arise in them for those who are murdered, raped or looted in large numbers by these animals.

If these people do not find the need to abide by the requisites of their faith, then at least they should learn a lesson from what is happening elsewhere: in the land of Saudi Arabia, these punishments are implemented. Statistics can reveal instances of the crimes of theft, plunder and fornication and how many of those guilty of these crimes were punished in the prescribed manner. I do not have these statistics but I have heard what eye-witnesses say in this regard and at the same time what I myself have observed: these crimes and their perpetrators are virtually non-existent there. It is merely due to the awe and fear of Islamic punishments that neither are there any instances of theft and fornication nor does the need arise to amputate hands of thieves or flog those guilty of fornication there. If any such incident does happen, such are the

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punishments that are meted out to the criminals that it becomes a strong deterrent for the rest. On the contrary, when we see the circumstances of our own country, we are forced to say what Jesus (sws) is reported to have said: "You have turned it [–house of God–] into a den of thieves." (Matthew, 21:13)

It is evident from the words "and let a group of Muslims at the time of their punishment be present there" that one of the objectives of Islamic punishments is that others receive a reminder and learn a lesson. Thus the Qur'ān mentions the word نَكَال (5:38) for them which means "exemplary punishment." Thus to make them exemplary these punishments must be given in public. If they are administered in jails, this purpose is lost. Some exegetes think that the word "group" also applies to a single individual. God knows what the source of this unique research is!

As far as the apparent words of this verse are concerned, it is evident that all types of men and women guilty of fornication are included in it. However, our jurists have imposed certain specifications, some of which are correct and some in my opinion not correct and some need elaboration. Though it is beyond the scope of this people to discuss juristic issues, it is essential that some important points raised by them be referred to.

Firstly, this punishment can only be implemented in an Islamic state. Hence, these directives had only been revealed when such a state had been set up in Madīnah.

Secondly, this punishment can only be meted out to mature and adult individuals. Juveniles and those inflicted with lunacy are exempt from it. This premise is self-evident. All such people have always been given this exemption.

Thirdly, slave-men and slave-women will only be administered half of this punishment. This also seems correct and is based on verse 25 of Sūrah al-Nisā'. Actually, in the times of the *jāhiliyyah* period, the moral character of slave-men and slave-women had deteriorated a lot. They could not have been immediately brought at par with free men and free women. For this reason, in their case, a gradual strategy was adopted. Once their mental and moral standards had been raised, the law of *mukātabat* mentioned later in this *sūrah* was revealed. This law ensured the emancipation of every slave who was able-minded, and thence slaves were regarded to have the same obligations and rights as the rest. This issue will be discussed more ahead.

Fourthly, one group of our jurists say that this punishment will only be implemented on Muslims. Non-Muslims will be exempt from it. Under an Islamic government, non-Muslim subjects are indeed exempt from public laws in their personal affairs; however, how can it be possible to sustain this exemption in punishments which are meant to create peace and justice in a society? If a Muslim criminal is flogged or stoned for committing fornication and a non-Muslim criminal is totally spared in this crime or given a lesser punishment, how can fornication be put an end to? Similar is the case of amputation of hands in the case of theft. If this discrimination is also maintained in the punishment of this crime, then it would mean that while an Islamic

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state stops Muslims from perpetrating this crime, it is giving a license to non-Muslims to commit this crime. This obviously is illogical and also against the practice of the Prophet (sws) and the rightly guided caliphs. Both implemented these punishments on non-Muslims too. I have written in detail about the rights of non-Muslims in my book *The Islamic State*. Those would like to read about this issue may consult this book.

Fifthly, almost all jurists are of the view that this punishment only relates to criminals who are unmarried or if married, the marriage has not been consummated. As for those who are married and have also consummated their marriage, their punishment is stoning to death. They argue in favour of stoning from the practice of the Prophet (sws) and the rightly guided caliphs. In this way, they specify that the punishment mentioned in this verse only relates to unmarried individuals who commit this crime. Or, in other words, through the Sunnah, they abrogate this punishment with regard to married men and women.

This last condition imposed by our jurists is very significant. Whether it is regarded as specifying a directive or abrogating it, one is not satisfied to see a directive of the Qur'ān being specified or abrogated by a *khabar wāḥid*. Thus the *khawārij* do not accept specifying or abrogating this directive in such a manner. They deny the punishment of stoning and regard the punishment mentioned in this verse to be applicable to all types of criminals guilty of committing it.

More important is the issue of our new *khawārij* than those of the previous ones. The latter only denied stoning and not flogging. The new ones are not even willing to accept flogging, let alone stoning. Thus it is essential that the source of stoning in the Qur'ān be explained and as well as the exact the relationship of the punishment mentioned in this verse with the punishment of stoning. I will first present the narratives from which our jurists have argued in favour of stoning and then indicate its source in the Qur'ān. After that, I will explain to which criminals the punishment of stoning must be administered and the type of criminals who were given this punishment by the Prophet (sws). Though I may be prolonging this discussion, yet it is not possible to ignore it. For this reason, I will try to briefly refer to some important aspects.

The following narrative reported by 'Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit is the one on the basis of which our jurists have regarded the punishment mentioned in this verse to be abrogated for married individuals:

خُذُوا عَنِّی قَدْ جَعَلَ اللّٰہُ لَھُنَّ سَبِیلًا اَلْبِکْرُ بِالْبِکْرِ جَلْدُ مِائَۃٍ وَنَفْیُ سَنَۃٍ وَالثَّیِّبُ بِالثَّیِّبِ جَلْدُ مِائَۃٍ وَالرَّجْمُ

The Prophet said: "Preserve what I am now informing you of. The Almighty has revealed the directive He had promised for regarding women guilty of fornication. If both the perpetrators of this crime unmarried, their punishment is one hundred lashes and one year exile and, if both are married, their punishment is lashes and

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death by stoning.[3]

If this narrative is deliberated upon, it will be seen that unmarried individuals guilty of this crime will be punished by one hundred lashes and also exiled for one year and, if both are married, their punishment is both lashes and death by stoning. The question arises that will both of punishments in each of the two cases be given simultaneously. The Hanafite and Shafite jurists say that lashes and stoning cannot be given together and that the flogging punishment mentioned has been abrogated by the practice of the Prophet (sws) and his companions; thus for married perpetrators of the crime, the only punishment is stoning.

It is this narrative of 'Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit on the basis of which the verse of Sūrah al-Nūr stands abrogated even though nothing except the Qur'ān can abrogate the Qur'ān. Then when this narrative could also not solve the problem, it was regarded to be abrogated by other narratives. It is such inferences of our jurists which have created doubts about religion in the minds of people. I will later show that if this narrative is deliberated upon in the light of the Qur'ān, it is in harmony with it and no need arises for any sort of abrogation.

The second narrative which is cited in this regard is reproduced thus with a heavy heart:

عن ابن عباس قال قال عمر قد خشيت أن يطول بالناس زمان حتى يقول قائل لا نجد الرجم فى كتاب الله فيضلوا بترك فريضة أنزلها الله وقد قرأنا الشَّيْخُ وَالشَّيْخَةُ إِذا زَنَيَا فَارْجُمُوهُمَا الْبَتَّةَ

Ibn 'Abbās stated: " 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said: 'I fear that time will pass over people until someone will say: "We do not find the verse of stoning in the Book of God." So, in this way, people will be led astray by abandoning a directive revealed by God. We used to read: الشَّيْخُ وَالشَّيْخَةُ إِذا زَنَيَا فَارْجُمُوهُمَا الْبَتَّةَ (Necessarily stone to death the married man and the married woman guilty of adultery).'"[4]

As stated earlier, I have cited this narrative with great aversion merely to clear doubts spread by devious elements and thereby reach the truth. The simpletons among our exegetes and jurists have included such narratives in their books.

Deliberation on this narrative shows that it seems to have been fabricated in every way by a hypocrite, and the purpose of this fabrication is to raise doubts on the preservation of the Qur'ān and implant this notion in the minds of the naïve that some verses of the Qur'ān were taken out from it.

Let us first reflect on the language of the narrative. Can any upright person regard this verse to be part of the Qur'ān? Even regarding it to be an utterance of Prophet

3. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 749, (no. 4414).
4. Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 5, 97.

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Muḥammad (sws) is impossible for any person of taste, let alone regarding it to be a verse of the Qur'ān. What relation can it have with the eloquent style and construction of the Qur'ān?

Secondly, if this was a verse of the Qur'ān, who had the authority of taking it out when its directive is still operational? What is the sense in expunging a verse and still keeping its directive intact? If this was a verse of the Qur'ān and later removed from it, then this means that the punishment of stoning was first in place and then abrogated. Then was the meaning of arguing in favour of this punishment?

Thirdly, even if this verse is accepted, the purpose of our jurists is not fulfilled. They need evidence for married people guilty of this crime whereas this verse only mentions old men and old women who have committed this crime. It is not essential for every married person to be old. Then what is the relation between the claim and its proof?

Nonetheless, this narrative is a worthless one. The irony is that it has been ascribed to 'Umar (rta). I am certain that if any person had the audacity to narrate it in his times, he would have not been spared by his lash. A weakness among our jurists is that when they indulge in debate with their rivals, they use all sorts of things that they can lay their hands on without realizing its far-reaching consequences.

These are the narratives which are cited in support of stoning and the criticism they invite has also been mentioned above. The question now is: what is the source of stoning in Islam? For what type of criminals is this punishment prescribed and to whom was it administered by the Prophet (sws)? It is essential to deliberate on this question because it is obvious that not only the Prophet (sws) meted out this punishment to certain criminals but the rightly guided caliphs too did so. Those who deny this established fact can deny everything. Hence I am not much concerned about them. However, since I myself am convinced about this punishment, I feel that it is my responsibility to find its source in the Qur'ān and also try to understand its occasion and background.

To understand this issue, an important premise must be fully kept in mind:

Criminals are of two types. One of them are those who are guilty of committing crimes like theft, murder, fornication and accusing someone of fornication but the manner in which these crimes are committed is not that they become a nuisance for the society or create a situation of law and order for the government. Their second type is of those who in their individual capacities and as a group become a nuisance for the both the society and the government. For the first type of criminals, the Qur'ān has prescribed certain punishments that are implemented by an Islamic government keeping view the conditions stipulated for them by the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. For the second type of criminals, punishments are mentioned in verses 33-34 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, and have been explained under them. These verses are:

جَزٰٓؤُا الَّذِيْنَ يُحَارِبُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ فَسَادًا اَنْ يُّقَتَّلُوْٓا اَوْ يُصَلَّبُوْٓا اَوْ تُقَطَّعَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَاَرْجُلُهُمْ مِّنْ

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خِلَافٍ اَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْاَرْضِ ۭ ذٰلِكَ لَهُمْ خِزْيٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ. اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَقْدِرُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ. (٥ :٣٣-٣٤)

The punishments of those who wage war against God and His Prophet and strive to spread anarchy in the land are to execute them in an exemplary way or to crucify them or to amputate their hands and feet from opposite sides or to banish them from the land. Such is their disgrace in this world, and in the Hereafter, theirs will be an awful doom except those who repent before you overpower them, then you should know that God is Oft-Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (5:33-34)

Reproduced below is what I wrote while explaining these verses:

The meaning of waging war against God and His Prophet is that a person or a group blatantly and obdurately tries to disrupt the system of justice which God and His Prophet have set up. If such subversive activities are from an external enemy, the directives of war have been mentioned in detail independently. Here, instead of the external enemy, punishments are being prescribed for enemies residing within the country and as citizens of the state regardless of being Muslim or non-Muslim challenge the law and system of the country. One way of violating the law is that a person perpetrates a crime; in this case, he will be dealt with through the general principle prescribed by the *sharī'ah* for common criminals. Another way is that a person or a group tries to take the law in his hands, disrupts the peace and stability of the area through his evil-doing and, people always feel that their lives, wealth and honour are in danger; murder, robbery, vandalism, hijacking, fornication, destruction and other similar crimes create a law and order situation for the government. For such criminals, instead of being dealt with through common punishments prescribed, an Islamic government has the authority to take the following steps.[5]

After this, I have referred to the source of the punishment of stoning in the following words:

The words اَنْ يُّقَتَّلُوْٓا (*aṇ yuqattalū*) refer to the fact that the criminals of this type will be executed. The word *taqtīl* (which is from the from *taf'īl*) has been used instead of *qatl*. In Arabic, *taqtīl* means to execute someone in such a way that there is severity in the process of killing him. This implies that not only should the criminals of this category be executed but the execution should be carried out in a manner that serves as a severe warning to others. Only punishments which are

5. *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 2, 505.

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prohibited in the *sharī'ah* like killing through burning will be an exception to this. Other than these, all other ways and means which can teach a lesson and terrorize hooligans and miscreants and at the same time create respect for law in the eyes of people can be adopted by a government. In my opinion, the punishment of *rajm* (stoning to death) is one form of *taqtīl*. Thus crooks and criminals which pose a threat for to the honour of decent people, who adopt fornication and hijacking as a profession, who attack the honour of people in broad daylight and openly commit rape, for them stoning is included in the word *taqtīl*.[6]

It is evident from these details that those who think that the punishment of stoning is not mentioned in the Qur'ān are incorrect. This punishment is based on verse 33 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah. It is for this reason that the instances of stoning that took place in the times of the Prophet (sws) have been mentioned by Imām al-Bukhārī in his *Al-Jāmi 'al-ṣaḥīḥ* under verse 33 (*muḥārabah* verse). He has also mentioned a narrative in the *kitāb al-muḥarabīn* of this book from which it becomes evident that some of our past authorities regarded this verse to be the source of this punishment.

Now let us take a brief look at the most famous incident of stoning that took place in the times of the Prophet (sws): the *rajm* of Mā'iz. Narratives about this person have a very strange type of discrepancy. Some narratives depict him to be a very decent and upright person and some show that he was a very wicked scoundrel. For my own guidance, I find it sufficient that the Prophet (sws) had him stoned to death and did not even lead his funeral prayer. For this reason, I give preference to narratives which portray his evil character that made him worthy of this punishment. It is evident from certain narratives that when the Prophet (sws) and his companions would go out for a battle, he would quietly hold back and taking advantage of the absence of men would try to chase women. Some narratives say that this would be like a goat chasing does. The Prophet (sws) would be continued to be informed of his pranks but he did not take any step to check him because as yet he had not committed a violation that could make him liable. Finally, he came under the jurisdiction of law and was called up by the Prophet (sws), who sternly questioned him. He then understood that he cannot hide his crime anymore and hence confessed. Upon confession, the Prophet (sws) ordered that he be stoned to death and did not offer his funeral prayer. After his stoning, the general impression of people that is evident from narratives was that many of them said that his wretchedness caught up with him until he was doomed. Though the Prophet (sws) had asked people not to comment about him after his stoning, yet this was the general impression they did form.

I will now cite some narratives so that some aspects become absolutely clear:

Firstly, like an upright person, Mā'iz had not come to the Prophet (sws) himself to confess his crime. He in fact came over to him at the insistence of the people of his

6. Ibid., vol. 2, 505-506

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tribe hoping that this would save him from a big punishment. The Prophet (sws) had already been informed of his crime and his confession was a consequence of the Prophet's questioning him.

Secondly, Mā'iz had a very loose and immoral character. When the Prophet (sws) and his companions would go out for a battle, he would chase women overcome with sexual frenzy.

Thirdly, neither did the Prophet (sws) pray for his forgiveness nor led his funeral prayer which is evidence enough that he was regarded a die-hard hypocrite.

Here are the narratives:

(1)

. . . قال يا بن أَخِي أنا أَعْلَمُ الناس بهذا الحديث كنت فِيمَنْ رَجَمَ الرَّجُلَ إِنَّا لَمَّا خَرَجْنَا بِهِ فَرَجَمْنَاهُ فَوَجَدَ مَسَّ الْحِجَارَةِ صَرَخَ بِنَا يا قَوْمُ رُدُّونِي إِلى رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فإن قَوْمِي قَتَلُونِي وَغَرُّونِي من نَفْسِي وَأَخْبَرُونِي أَنَّ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ غَيْرُ قَاتِلِي فلم نَنْزَعْ عنه حتى قَتَلْنَاهُ فلما رَجَعْنَا إِلى رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَأَخْبَرْنَاهُ قال فَهَلَّا تَرَكْتُمُوهُ وَجِئْتُمُونِي بِهِ لِيَسْتَثْبِتَ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ منه فَأَمَّا لِتَرْكِ حَدٍّ فلا قال فَعَرَفْتُ وَجْهَ الحديث

Jābir (rta) stated: "O Nephew! I know him the most from among all the people. I was among those who stoned this person to death. The incident happened thus: We started to stone him after bringing him into the open. When he was struck by the stones, he shouted: 'People! Take me over to the Prophet (sws); the people of my tribe have had me killed and they deceived me. They continued to say to me that the Prophet (sws) would not have me killed.' However, we ended up killing him. So, when we returned to the Prophet (sws) and informed him of his words, he said: 'Why did you not spare him? Why did you not bring him to me?' This he said so that he could find out the reality. He did not say this to annul the punishment." The narrator says: "After this, I understood this narrative."[7]

(2)

. . . فَرَمَيْنَاهُ بِجَلَامِيدِ الْحَرَّةِ يَعْنِي الْحِجَارَةَ حتى سَكَتَ قال ثُمَّ قام رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ خَطِيبًا من العشى فقال أَوَ كُلَّمَا انْطَلَقْنَا غُزَاةً فى سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ تَخَلَّفَ رَجُلٌ فى عِيَالِنَا له نَبِيبٌ كَنَبِيبِ التَّيْسِ على أَنْ لَا أُوتَى بِرَجُلٍ فَعَلَ ذلك إِلا نَكَّلْتُ بِهِ قال فما اسْتَغْفَرَ له ولا سَبَّهُ

7. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 145, (no. 4420).

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"Thus we hurled on him stones from the valley of al-Ḥarrah until he died." A narrator said: "The same day the Prophet (sws) delivered a sermon at the time of *'aṣr* and said: 'Was this not the case that whenever we would go out to wage war for the cause of God, a person would stay behind among our families and behave like a goat overcome with sexual frenzy. Listen! It is incumbent upon me that if such a person is brought before me, I give him an exemplary punishment.'" A narrator said: "Neither did the Prophet (sws) pray for his forgiveness nor abused him."[8]

(3)

عن بن عَبَّاسٍ أَنَّ مَاعِزَ بن مَالِكٍ أَتَى النبى صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فقال إنه زَنَى فَأَعْرَضَ عنه فَأَعَادَ عليه مِرَارًا فَأَعْرَضَ عنه فَسَأَلَ قَوْمَهُ أَمَجْنُونٌ هو قالوا ليس بِهِ بَأْسٌ قال أَفَعَلْتَ بها قال نعم فَأَمَرَ بِهِ أَنْ يُرْجَمَ فَانْطُلِقَ بِهِ فَرُجِمَ ولم يُصَلِّ عليه

'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās narrated that Mā'iz ibn Mālik came to the Prophet (sws) and confessed that he had committed fornication. The Prophet (sws) ignored him. Then he repeated his confession a number of times. Even then the Prophet (sws) disregarded him. He asked his people: 'Is he mad?' They replied: 'No, he is a normal person.' The Prophet (sws) then asked him: 'Did you really commit vulgarity with that girl?' He replied: 'Yes.' Thus the Prophet ordered that he be stoned to death. Thus he was and the Prophet (sws) did not offer his funeral prayer.[9]

(4)

فَأَمَرَ بِهِ فَرُجِمَ فَكَانَ الناس فيه فِرْقَتَيْنِ قَائِلٌ يقول لقد هَلَكَ لقد أَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُهُ

The Prophet (sws) ordered about Mā'iz whereby he was stoned to death. Later, people were divided into two groups about him. One of them opined that his sin surrounded him from all sides until he was killed.[10]

(5)

فَأَمَرَ بِهِ فَرُجِمَ فَسَمِعَ النبى صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ رَجُلَيْنِ من أَصْحَابِهِ يقول أَحَدُهُمَا لِصَاحِبِهِ انْظُرْ إلى هذا

8. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, 1320, (no. 1694).
9. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 146, (no. 4421).
10. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, 1322, (no. 1695).

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الذی سَتَرَ اللّٰہ علیہ فلم تَدَعْہُ نَفْسُہُ حتی رُجِمَ رَجْمَ الْکَلْبِ

Thus the Prophet (sws) ordered about Mā'iz; so he was stoned to death. After this incident, the Prophet (sws) heard one his companions say to the other: "Look at this wretch. The Almighty had stretched a veil over him but his desire did not leave him until he was stoned to death like a dog."[11]

The next incident of stoning is about a woman called Ghāmidiyyah who belonged to the tribe of Ghāmid, a sub-tribe of the tribe of Juhaynah. The details which are found about her in the narratives do not tell us anything about her character or her marital status. Among the little that is mentioned about her has many mutual contradictions like the incident of Mā'iz ibn Mālik al-Aslamī. It is evident from some narrative that initially the Prophet (sws) tried to dissuade her but she remained emphatic on her confession. At this, he said: "If you insist, go and come back after you have delivered the child." Later, she came over with the child. At this, he said: "Go, suckle the child and come after weaning." She then returned after weaning the child and had a piece of bread in her hand which she made the child eat in front of the Prophet (sws). It was then that he ordered to have her stoned. On the contrary, some other narratives say that when she confessed, the Prophet (sws) consigned her to the custody of a person from the Anṣār. When she informed the Prophet (sws) that she had delivered the child, he said that she cannot be stoned in these circumstances when there is no one to suckle this little child. At this, a person from the Anṣār got up and took responsibility of suckling the child. After this, the Prophet (sws) order for her stoning without any delay.

Not only does this contradiction comes to light after the narratives are studied, it also becomes evident that she was a rather independent and free sort of a woman who neither had a husband nor a guardian who was prepared to take her responsibility. She spent her time of pregnancy at the place of a person from the Anṣār. From her confession to the implementation of punishment on her, no one from her family or tribe came forward to pursue her case. Although details about this woman have not been fully preserved, but in my opinion, her case was similar to that of Mā'iz as a result of which she too was stoned to death.

A study of those times shows that in the times of *jāhiliyyah* there were many women who would run dens of prostitution. It was mostly the Jews under whose patronage this was done. They would receive a part of the income generated. Once an Islamic state was set up in Madīnah, this evil practice was greatly checked. However, such criminals do not easily desist from their wrongdoings. It seems that some men and women of this sort continued to carry out this practice in secrecy and did not stop even after warning. Finally, when they came under the jurisdiction of law, they were stoned to death in accordance with the verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah cited earlier.

11. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 148, (no. 4428).

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Since the punishment of rape is also of the category of spreading anarchy in the society and waging war against God and His Prophet (sws), criminals guilty of it were stoned to death in accordance with this verse by the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) and were not administered the punishment of a hundred lashes which was meant for common criminals of fornication. Since in this crime, the criminal did not deserve any lenience because he had raped a woman going to offer the prayer, the Prophet (sws) never inquired about his marital status. This incident is mentioned thus in a narrative:

عن عَلْقَمَةَ بن وَائِلٍ عن أبيه أَنَّ امْرَأَةً خَرَجَتْ على عَهْدِ النبى صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ تُرِيدُ الصَّلَاةَ فَتَلَقَّاهَا رَجُلٌ فَتَجَلَّلَهَا فَقَضَى حَاجَتَهُ منها فَصَاحَتْ وَانْطَلَقَ فَمَرَّ عليها رَجُلٌ فقالت إِنَّ ذَاكَ فَعَلَ بِي كَذَا وَكَذَا وَمَرَّتْ عِصَابَةٌ من الْمُهَاجِرِينَ فقالت إِنَّ ذلك الرَّجُلَ فَعَلَ بِي كَذَا وَكَذَا فَانْطَلَقُوا فَأَخَذُوا الرَّجُلَ الذى ظَنَّتْ أَنَّهُ وَقَعَ عليها فَأَتَوْهَا بِهِ فقالت نعم هو هذا فَأَتَوْا بِهِ النبى صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فلما أَمَرَ بِهِ قام صَاحِبُهَا الذى وَقَعَ عليها فقال يا رَسُولَ اللّٰهِ أنا صَاحِبُهَا فقال لها اذْهَبِي فَقَدْ غَفَرَ اللّٰهُ لَكِ وقال لِلرَّجُلِ قَوْلًا حَسَنًا قال أبو دَاوُد يَعْنِي الرَّجُلَ الْمَأْخُوذَ وقال لِلرَّجُلِ الذى وَقَعَ عليها ارْجُمُوهُ

‘Alqamah ibn Wā’il reports from his father that in the times of the Prophet (sws), a woman came out of her house to go and offer the prayer. Thus a person saw her on the way. He got hold of her and fulfilled his sexual desire from her. At this, she shouted and cried out. So, he took to his heels. Meanwhile a person chanced by. The woman told her how she had been molested by a person. When this conversation was taking place, a group of the Muhājirūn too came over there. She narrated her tale to them as well. So they ran and caught hold of the person about which person the woman had indicated. Thus they brought him over to her and she said: “Yes this is the same person.” They then took him to the Prophet (sws). At this, the Prophet (sws) immediately ordered for his punishment. Thereafter, the real criminal stood up and said: “O Messenger of God! It was me who molested this woman.” At this, the Prophet (sws) told the woman: “Go, God has forgiven you,” and expressed favourable words for the person who had been caught as a suspect. After that, regarding the person who had raped her, he said: “Stone him.”[12]

It is evident from this discussion that all the incidents mentioned in the books of Ḥadīth are not related to common criminals of fornication. They are about such scoundrels who because of their sexual misdemeanour and dissolute practices were a severe threat to decent women and were guilty of raping them. In fact, would adopt this heinous act as a profession. Then when they think that they are being grabbed by

12. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 134, (no. 4379).

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the law, they would confess their crime in accordance with the common psyche of such criminals in order to gain sympathy of both the society and the law. As to why the Prophet (sws) ascertained the marital status of criminals of these types, then this was to determine the circumstances of the criminals that whether they deserved any lenience in the punishment – a principle upheld by the Islamic *sharī'ah* too just as it is upheld by other penal systems. A court must give due regard to the age, marital status, mental condition, environment, in short every factor that can become a motive or hindrance in committing this crime. The words ثیب and بکر occur in the narratives. In Arabic, just as these words are spoken for married and unmarried individuals respectively, they also refer to middle aged people and to the budding youth. The mistake of our jurists is that they have regarded a state of the criminal to be the basis of the directive, whereas, it has no relationship with its basis. Such factors are always kept in consideration in the implementation of every punishment. Thus, those who regard the verse under discussion to be abrogated are not correct in my view. No verse of the Qur'ān has ever been abrogated by any other thing except Qur'ān itself, and both the abrogating and the abrogated verses are present in the Qur'ān. Even if the sphere of a verse is curtailed or made specific, then indications of this are either found in the context or occasion of the verse or in other instances of the Qur'ān.

If the narrative reported by 'Ubāah ibn Ṣāmit (rta) is understood in the light of this discussion, it has a certain meaning. The letter و here is for division and not for addition. In other words, the real punishment of any person guilty of fornication whether married or unmarried is a hundred lashes but if an unmarried person cannot be stalled by the punishment of lashing, a government, in accordance with the verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah referred above, can also exile that person for a year if this is more expedient because the authority of exiling a person has also been given to the government. Similarly, the real punishment of a married person guilty of this crime is also a hundred lashes, as is evident from the narrative. However, if such a criminal cannot be stalled by the punishment of lashing and has become a nuisance for the society, a government can administer the punishment of *taqtīl* (stoning) in accordance with this very verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah.

اَلزَّانِیۡ لَا یَنۡکِحُ اِلَّا زَانِیَۃً اَوۡ مُشۡرِکَۃً ۫ وَّ الزَّانِیَۃُ لَا یَنۡکِحُہَاۤ اِلَّا زَانٍ اَوۡ مُشۡرِکٌ ۚ وَ حُرِّمَ ذٰلِکَ عَلَی الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ ﴿۳﴾[13]

The words لَا یَنۡکِحُ are not meant as a description of a situation. They are meant as a negative imperative. When a negation is meant to both stop as well as to urge and exhort people to refrain from something, then it will be mentioned as a description of

13. A man guilty of fornication should only marry a woman guilty of fornication or an idolatress. And a woman guilty of fornication should only be married by a man guilty of fornication or an idolater. And this has been prohibited to the believers.

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a situation. I have explained this style under verse 272 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Here the purpose is to exhort and rouse the faith of a Muslim society: they should abhor a person guilty of fornication marrying among them and as guardians not let their daughters wed such people; such people should only have the option of marrying women guilty of fornication or idolatry. No believing woman should be prepared to marry such people. Similarly, a woman who has committed this crime should not find a man prepared to marry her. Only a man guilty of this crime or an idolater should be available to her. No believer should bring home this filth. This is because believers are prohibited to marry men and women guilty of this crime.

The mention of a man guilty of fornication with an idolater and a woman guilty of fornication with an idolatress is very meaningful. I have been referring to the similarity of fornication and polytheism at many instances in this exegesis. Ancient divine scriptures compare an idolater to a harlot. This comparison carries great eloquence in it. Fornication is the same type of moral filth as is the filth of polytheism with regard to faith. It is for this generic reason that polytheism and polytheists are called filth (9:28).

The need to awaken the faith of the society from its slumber was that mere imposition of law, however unbiased and sagacious it may be, cannot protect the society until the society itself has an aversion to sin. In the implementation of law, especially when it is a stern one, there necessarily are conditions because of which many criminals succeed in protecting themselves from it. It is the responsibility of the society to thwart the activities of the criminals by hating what they do, and forcing them to live a life of humiliation wherever they are. If they want to marry an upright Muslim woman, she should reject such proposals; so much so, such people do not have the courage to even think of marrying among them. This vigilance is essential to check crimes. Among the various pitfalls of modern times is that it is not merely that the penal code is not Islamic, a more situation of concern is that feelings for Islam have vanished. If in these times, a person wants to find a match for his daughter, he mostly looks for highly regarded worldly qualities and very few people care for qualities that are referred to in this verse.

وَ الَّذِيْنَ يَرْمُوْنَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَاْتُوْا بِاَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَآءَ فَاجْلِدُوْهُمْ ثَمٰنِيْنَ جَلْدَةً وَّ لَا تَقْبَلُوْا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً اَبَدًا ۚ وَ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ۙ﴿۴﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ وَ اَصْلَحُوْا ۚ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۵﴾[14]

These verses mention the law of evidence and the punishment of accusing a person of fornication (*qadhf*). It should be kept in mind that in an Islamic society, regarding

14. And those who accuse chaste women, then do not bring four witnesses to support their accusation, flog them with eighty lashes and never accept their testimony in future. It is these people who are the real defiant. Those who repent and reform after this, then God is Forgiving and Merciful.

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someone's evidence to be inadmissible forever is no ordinary a thing. It means that a person's reputation has been permanently dented. The real status of this *ummah* is that they bear evidence to the truth before God on earth. Therefore, if a person's evidence is regarded to be inadmissible, it would mean that he has lost his status as an individual of this *ummah*.

Though the demonstrative pronoun الَّذِيْنَ is used for the masculine gender, there is no reason that women be exempted from the punishment if they are guilty of this crime. Hence this word will include both genders. The reason that men have been addressed is because of being the dominant gender (*'alā sabīl al-taghlīb*).

In such a context, the word مُحْصَنٰتٌ is used for free women in contrast to slaves. For this reason, well-argued is the opinion of those who believe that slave men and women will receive half of the punishment.

After repentance and making amends, the sin of such individuals will be forgiven before God but the in-acceptability of their testimony will still stand. The reason for this is that the matter of repentance of a person relates to his heart and only God knows a person's heart. It is also evident from the words of the verse that forgiveness relates only to repentance and not to testimony. Hence, such a person's testimony will never ever be accepted.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَرْمُوْنَ اَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُمْ شُهَدَآءُ اِلَّآ اَنْفُسُهُمْ فَشَهَادَةُ اَحَدِهِمْ اَرْبَعُ شَهٰدٰتٍۭ بِاللّٰهِ ۙ اِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ۝ وَالْخَامِسَةُ اَنَّ لَعْنَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ اِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ۝ وَيَدْرَؤُا عَنْهَا الْعَذَابَ اَنْ تَشْهَدَ اَرْبَعَ شَهٰدٰتٍۭ بِاللّٰهِ ۙ اِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ۝ وَالْخَامِسَةَ اَنَّ غَضَبَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَآ اِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ۝[15]

If a person accuses his wife of fornication and he has none but himself as a witness to this crime, the matter will be decided through oaths. In the *sharī'ah*, this is called *Li'ān*. The verse describes its procedure.

The word الْعَذَابَ in عَنْهَا الْعَذَابَ وَيَدْرَؤُا obviously refers to the punishment referred to in verse 2. It is against the principles of Arabic language to regard it to refer to any other punishment.

Our jurists are of the opinion that if such an incident takes place between a husband and wife, a court of law shall annul this marriage. This seems to be a wise opinion because when matters reach this extent, it cannot be expected that the harmony that is needed between a husband and wife in a marriage can remain intact.

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15. And those who accuse their wives and have no other witness except themselves, then the procedure of their testimony is that they should swear four times by God and say that they are truthful and the fifth time they should say that may the curse of God be on them if they were lying. And the punishment can be averted from the woman when she swears four times by God that this person is a liar and the fifth time she should say that may the wrath of God come upon her if he was truthful.

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وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ تَوَّابٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿١٠﴾[16]

This verse is meant to warn and remind people, as has been indicated earlier. The answer to the condition it states is suppressed in accordance with linguistic principles. Verse 14 ahead reveals this suppression. The implication is that it is the consequence of God's blessings and mercy and the fact that He accepts repentance that He is given people these clear directives replete with wisdom so that they are guided to repentance and to mending their ways; otherwise, the attitude they have adopted would have only earned His wrath.

It may be kept in mind that these directives were revealed in the times when because of the conspiracies of the hypocrites great weaknesses had arisen among the Muslims, as will become evident in the succeeding verses. However, instead of punishing people for these weaknesses, God, out of His grace and mercy, used these circumstances to reveal directives that were necessary to protect an Islamic society from the conspiracies and connivances of the devils and hypocrites.

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Section II: Verses (11-26)

In these verses, while referring to the mischief worked by the hypocrites in the incident of *ifk*, certain weaknesses are pointed out which manifested themselves in a group of Muslims. They inadvertently had become a part of this mischief and rather rashly started to spread the propaganda these hypocrites wanted to spread. This is in spite of the fact that the Muslims must base their mutual dealing on trust and give others the benefit of doubt. If a Muslim hears something evil regarding a fellow Muslim, he must not accept it nor spread it unless the matter has been fully investigated. In this regard, the desire and effort of the hypocrites and their patronisers are exposed. Muslims must stand on guard against them because these hypocrites are after maligning their moral repute by spreading all kinds of rumours. They must not allow them to achieve this objective. To achieve this end, important directives are also given in this regard. They are also told to forgive those who have inadvertently become a part of this mischief.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ جَآءُوْ بِالْاِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ ؕ لَا تَحْسَبُوْهُ شَرًّا لَّكُمْ ؕ بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ؕ لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّا اكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْاِثْمِ ۚ وَالَّذِيْ تَوَلّٰى كِبْرَهٗ مِنْهُمْ لَهٗ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١١﴾ لَوْلَآ اِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوْهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتُ

16. And had not God's mercy and blessings been upon you and had it not been that God accepts repentance and is wise, you would have been seized by Him.

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بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا ۙ وَّ قَالُوْا هٰذَآ اِفْكٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٢﴾ لَوْلَا جَآءُوْ عَلَيْهِ بِاَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَآءَ ۚ فَاِذْ لَمْ يَاْتُوْا بِالشُّهَدَآءِ
فَاُولٰٓئِكَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِيْ مَآ اَفَضْتُمْ
فِيْهِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٤﴾ اِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهٗ بِاَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَتَقُوْلُوْنَ بِاَفْوَاهِكُمْ مَّا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ وَّتَحْسَبُوْنَهٗ هَيِّنًا ۖ وَّ
هُوَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٥﴾ وَلَوْلَآ اِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوْهُ قُلْتُمْ مَّا يَكُوْنُ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّتَكَلَّمَ بِهٰذَا ۖ سُبْحٰنَكَ هٰذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٦﴾
يَعِظُكُمُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ تَعُوْدُوْا لِمِثْلِهٖٓ اَبَدًا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَيُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿١٨﴾ اِنَّ
الَّذِيْنَ يُحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ تَشِيْعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ۙ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ وَاَنْتُمْ
لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٢٠﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّبِعُوْا
خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّتَّبِعْ خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ فَاِنَّهٗ يَاْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاۗءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۭ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ
مَا زَكٰى مِنْكُمْ مِّنْ اَحَدٍ اَبَدًا ۙ وَّلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُزَكِّيْ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢١﴾ وَلَا يَاْتَلِ اُولُوا الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ
وَالسَّعَةِ اَنْ يُّؤْتُوْٓا اُولِي الْقُرْبٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنَ وَالْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۡ وَلْيَعْفُوْا وَلْيَصْفَحُوْا ۭ اَلَا تُحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ يَّغْفِرَ
اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَرْمُوْنَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ الْغٰفِلٰتِ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ لُعِنُوْا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۠ وَ
لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ يَّوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ اَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَاَيْدِيْهِمْ وَاَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ يَوْمَىِٕذٍ يُّوَفِّيْهِمُ
اللّٰهُ دِيْنَهُمُ الْحَقَّ وَيَعْلَمُوْنَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿٢٥﴾ اَلْخَبِيْثٰتُ لِلْخَبِيْثِيْنَ وَالْخَبِيْثُوْنَ لِلْخَبِيْثٰتِ ۚ وَ
الطَّيِّبٰتُ لِلطَّيِّبِيْنَ وَالطَّيِّبُوْنَ لِلطَّيِّبٰتِ ۚ اُولٰٓئِكَ مُبَرَّءُوْنَ مِمَّا يَقُوْلُوْنَ ۭ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّرِزْقٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

Those who have spread the mischief of *ifk* are only a group from among you. Do not think this to be bad for you; it is, in fact, better for you. The sin each of them has earned will be placed in his account and for the originator of this mischief, there is a great torment. (11)

Why did this not happen that when you people heard this, believing men and believing women had thought graciously about one another and said: "This is a blatant slander." (12)

Why did not these people bring forth four witnesses to substantiate their accusation? So, when they did not bring witnesses, then it is definitely they who are liars in the sight of God. (13)

And were it not for God's grace and mercy upon you in this world and in the

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Hereafter, a great torment would have visited you because of what you had become entangled in. Just reflect when you were spreading with your tongues and saying with your mouths that which you had no knowledge of. And you were regarding this to be something ordinary; yet it is something very grave to God. Why did this not happen that as soon as you heard it, you had said: "What right do we have to say such a thing? God forbid, this is a great slander." (14-16)

God counsels you that if you are believers, then you must never do this again. And God profoundly explains His revelations for you and God is All-Knowing and Wise. (17-18)

Indeed, those who want vulgarity to spread among Muslims, for them is a painful torment in this world and in the Hereafter. And God knows and you do not know. And were it not for God's grace and mercy upon you, and had not God been very Gracious and Ever-Merciful, you would have got caught in a calamity. (19-20)

Believers! Do not follow the footsteps of Satan and he who follows the footsteps of Satan should remember that Satan always leads people to lewdness and evil. And had not God's grace and mercy been upon you, none of you could have ever become pure. In fact, it is God Who purifies whomsoever He wishes and God hears and knows all. (21)

Those among you who are affluent and prosperous should not swear that they will not spend on the kindred, the needy and those who migrate for the cause of God. In fact, they should forgive and forgo. Do you not want God to forgive you? And God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (22)

Indeed, those who accuse chaste upright believing women stand cursed both in this world and in the Hereafter, and for them is a great torment. On the day, when their tongues, hands and feet shall bear witness before them to their deeds. On that day God will give to them in full the retribution they deserve and they shall know that only God is the truth and One Who explains. (23-25)

Evil women shall be for evil men and evil men shall be for evil women. And pure women shall be for pure men and pure men shall be for pure women. These people shall be acquitted from the evil things they say. For them are forgiveness and sustenance of honour. (26)

Explanation

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ جَآءُوْ بِالْاِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ ؕ لَا تَحْسَبُوْهُ شَرًّا لَّكُمْ ؕ بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ؕ لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّا اكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْاِثْمِ ۚ وَالَّذِيْ تَوَلّٰى كِبْرَهٗ مِنْهُمْ لَهٗ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿۱۱﴾[17]

The word اِفْكٌ refers to something that is fabricated, false and against reality. Here, it refers to the mischievous propaganda spread by the hypocrites at the time of the battle

17. Those who have spread the mischief of *ifk* are only a group from among you. Do not think this to be bad for you; it is, in fact, better for you. The sin each of them has earned will be placed in his account and for the originator of this mischief, there is a great torment.

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of Muṣṭaliq to malign ‘Ā’ishah (rta). There are certain lies that are not even worthy of being mentioned by the tongue and this was one that was concocted against a mother of the faithful. For this reason, after referring it by the word اِفْكٌ, the Qur’ān has not spoken about it any further. It has only informed us about those who originated it and spread it so that it becomes evident that the very source of this lie is someone whose words are neither of any significance nor worthy of any investigation. However, the lesson that can be learnt from it is something everyone must understand. Thus the Qur’ān has not referred to the nature of contents of the incident. It is evident from this as far as the incident itself was concerned, Muslims were certain that it was a slander and a false accusation. They knew that the hypocrites were behind this mischief; however, when something is spread in the masses to create commotion among them, the naïve start to transmit it without realizing the implications.[18]

The words عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ refer to the group of hypocrites that had infiltrated into Muslims had their own evil designs. Their leader was ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy. Since in their outward behaviour they were not different from Muslims, they would get the chance to spread their venom and many simpletons would be lured by them. Thus the Qur’ān has used this expression to point to them and the purpose of this is to warn the Muslims that this propaganda has been worked by a group from among them and that they should beware about them.

Consider next the words “Do not think this to be bad for you; it is, in fact, better for you.”

The greatest good concealed in it was that Muslims were able to fully detect a dissident group that was hiding among them. Had this not been the case, who knows what this cancerous growth could have ended up in and the disorder it could have created.

The second good found in it was that the weaknesses that were concealed among Muslims were fully highlighted as a result of this trial and were reformed at the right

18. It is evident from books of history and biographies that the only thing that happened was that in 6 AH, the Prophet (sws) was returning to Madīnah from the battle of Banī Muṣṭaliq. ‘Ā’ishah (rta) was travelling on a separate camel. During the journey, the caravan stopped at a place to spend the night. Before the caravan departed, ‘Ā’ishah (rta) had gone out to relieve herself. During this time, the army was ordered to march ahead. The caravan departed and her camel-driver also walked off with them thinking that she was sitting in the camel-cubicle. When ‘Ā’ishah (rta) returned, she found no option in the dark of night but to stay there until God created some way out for her. Ṣafwān (rta), a companion of the Prophet (sws) was given the task of walking behind the caravan to detect anything that may have been left behind. When in the morning he reached the place where the caravan had stopped and saw ‘Ā’ishah (rta) there, he spontaneously uttered: اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ. Ultimately, he made her sit on her camel. She climbed on it while he took hold of the camel’s bridle and led away the animal. Finally, they reached the caravan. It was not something extra-ordinary for such an incident to have taken place during a caravan journey. However, the hypocrites worked great propaganda on the basis of this small incident.

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time. The importance this has for the spiritual purification of the society is absolutely evident.

The third good found in it is that it created a very appropriate atmosphere for the revelation of many directives for the reformation and organization of the society. Had these directives been revealed without these conducive circumstances, their real significance would not have become evident to many people.

The word كِبْرٌ means the real or greater part of a sin. The expression الَّذِيْ تَوَلّٰى كِبْرَهٗ would mean "the person who is the originator of this mischief." This reference is to 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy who was a very mean hypocrite. Before this too, he was responsible for creating mischief on many occasions and was solely responsible for the current one.

In the earlier part, Muslims were assured that this mischief will ultimately augur well for them; now it is said that for the miscreants, this mischief will sound their doom. The punishment of each of them will be commensurate to the extent of his share in it, and the person who is actually responsible for it will face a grave punishment in the hereafter.

لَوْلَآ اِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوْهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتُ بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا ۙ وَّقَالُوْا هٰذَآ اِفْكٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٢﴾[19]

It is the right of every Muslim man and woman in an Islamic society that other people think well about them and give them the benefit of doubt. They should continue to do this until it is proven that they are not worthy of this attitude. An obvious requisite of this attitude is that if a Muslim hears something about a fellow Muslim that may dent his estimation about him, he should not start spreading this unless there he has a solid proof. To remain unconcerned in such matters is also not the right attitude thinking that one should just ignore if someone is being maligned. The proper attitude in this regard is to defend the honour of every brother because this is a person's obligation. It is on this moral principle of an Islamic society that Muslims are asked to focus on in this verse.

On the one hand is this moral principle of an Islamic society and on the other if we just survey what is going on in our own society, we will realize that it is based on just the opposite principle. Today the dominant view is that every person must be regarded as a bad person unless we have a vested interest in him of a personal or collective nature, in which case he will be regarded highly. Moreover, spreading rumours about others has today become an art as well as a very successful profession. There are so many journalists and writers in our society whose profession is to spend all their days and nights in trying to find and spread hearsay.

These rumours are published in our newspapers with very bold titles and the most successful newspapers and magazines are those which are the most adept in

19. Why did this not happen that when you people heard this, believing men and believing women had thought graciously about one another and said: "This is a blatant slander."

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fabricating such rumours. Such is the extent of moral misconduct of our society that instead of regarding such scandals to be slander, they believe in every part of it and spread it in the society as if it has been divinely revealed.

لَوْلَا جَآءُوْ عَلَيْهِ بِاَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَآءَ ۚ فَاِذْ لَمْ يَاْتُوْا بِالشُّهَدَآءِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾[20]

The implication is that the slander of these slanderers could have been given weight if in accordance with the dictates of the *sharī'ah* they had produced four witnesses in favour of this accusation. It may be kept in mind that as proof of this crime the law of producing four witnesses had been revealed much earlier in verse 15 of Sūrah al-Nisā'. The implication is that if they have failed to produce four witnesses, then according to the law of God, it is these people who are liars; hence on what basis have those believed in the accusation leveled by these people?

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِيْ مَآ اَفَضْتُمْ فِيْهِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٤﴾[21]

The expression أفاض فى الحديث means that a person makes a mountain of a mole-hill. This is a similar admonition to Muslims as the one sounded in verse 10 earlier. The implication is that people should give due regard to God's mercy and blessings lest they invite His punishment by once again getting entangled in a similar mischief.

This verse addresses the whole society even though those who were responsible for spreading this mischief or had showed negligence and carelessness were not many. This is because this ailment is contagious. Even if some people are afflicted by it, everyone must be informed of its danger lest it becomes an epidemic that engulfs the whole society.

اِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهٗ بِاَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَتَقُوْلُوْنَ بِاَفْوَاهِكُمْ مَّا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ وَّتَحْسَبُوْنَهٗ هَيِّنًا ۖ وَّهُوَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٥﴾[22]

This verse refers to the gravity of spreading this rumour. Accepting a statement must be an intellectual process not hearsay. Only that information is worthy of transmission which is based on sound knowledge. If a person refuses to use his intellect and only uses the services of his tongue, he will communicate everything he hears without confirming it. In this manner, he himself will also become involved in the mischief spread by Satan and lure others too in it. It is to this danger that this verse

20. Why did not these people bring forth four witnesses to substantiate their accusation? So, when they did not bring witnesses, then it is definitely they who are liars in the sight of God.

21. And were it not for God's grace and mercy upon you in this world and in the Hereafter, a great torment would have visited you because of what you had become entangled in.

22. Just reflect when you were spreading with your tongues and saying with your mouths that which you had no knowledge of. And you were regarding this to be something ordinary; yet it is something very grave to God.

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informs Muslims: some people are using their tongues instead of their intellect to transmit information and are guilty of spreading rumours.

وَلَوْلَآ اِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوْهُ قُلْتُمْ مَّا يَكُوْنُ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّتَكَلَّمَ بِهٰذَا ۖ سُبْحٰنَكَ هٰذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٦﴾ [23]

The word سُبْحٰنَكَ here is in exactly the same meaning as مَعَاذَ اللّٰه (God forbid). The implication is that when a certain piece of information which had no proof came into the knowledge of the Muslims and which related not merely to the honour of a single believing woman but in fact to ‘Ā’ishah (sws), the mother of the faithful, why did they not say that they have no authority to state something that is unfounded that maligns a believing woman; it is blatant slander.

The principles that can be derived from these verses regarding the acceptance of a narrative are very important. Were it not for fear of prolonging the discussion, I would have tried to elaborate upon them. Scholars should keep in consideration these aspects though.

يَعِظُكُمُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ تَعُوْدُوْا لِمِثْلِهٖٓ اَبَدًا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَيُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿١٨﴾ [24]

The meaning of rebuke and prohibition is found in the word وَعْظٌ. For this reason a particle of negation after it is not needed. These verses also form a warning, the way the three earlier ones do. The directives of God given in this *sūrah* are essential to protect one’s self from His wrath. For this reason, these warnings are sounded in quick succession.

The first of these verses states that abstaining from such an unbecoming attitude is a requisite of faith. If they do not desist from them, it would mean that their claim to faith is baseless. The second verse states that since God is fully explaining His directives, the responsibility of following these rests on people. Also since God is wise, they should keep in mind that whatever He has told them is a great source of blessing for them. In other words, these directives have been taught by the all-knowing and wise God, and no one should be foolish enough to think that he knows more than God or is wiser than Him.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ تَشِيْعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ۙ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ [25]

This verse refers to the hypocrites who had instigated this propaganda. As mentioned

23. Why did this not happen that as soon as you heard it, you had said: “What right do we have to say such a thing? God forbid, this is a great slander.”

24. God counsels you that if you are believers, then you must never do this again. And God profoundly explains His revelations for you and God is All-Knowing and Wise.

25. Indeed, those who want vulgarity to spread among Muslims, for them is a painful torment in this world and in the Hereafter. And God knows and you do not know.

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earlier, they were under the influence of the Jews. It was very discomforting for the Jews that the hearts of their opponents were being overawed by the moral superiority of the Muslims. In the time of *jāhiliyyah*, the Arab society was a society in which the characters of both men and women were besmeared with the filth of misconduct. The situation of the People of the Book, especially the Jews was even worse. When they observed that this filth was being transformed into a purity that was enviable, they found themselves in a quandary. Their own meanness became even more prominent to them. To avenge this state of affairs, they chalked out a scheme to spread vulgarity and evil among Muslims. To execute this plan, they employed the services of the hypocrites since they were under their influence and in fact had been nurtured by them. These hypocrites especially targeted the wives of the Prophet (sws) and reckoned that if their scheme succeeded the moral repute of the Muslims would be severely compromised. However, God's grace and blessings did not let this conspiracy bear fruit.

It is to these miscreants that the verse under discussion alludes to. Its last words "and God knows and you do not know" are a warning to those Muslims who were being lured by this mischief of the hypocrites because they were not fully aware of the machinations of these hidden enemies.

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٢٠﴾[26]

This very verse has occurred earlier too. See verse 10. The only difference is that there the attributes of God mentioned were تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيْمٌ and here they are رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ. The answer to the conditional particle لَوْ is suppressed here as well, and this suppression is meant to emphasize the warning. The implication is that it is purely because of the grace and mercy of God that He has not punished Muslims for this huge blunder. Otherwise, the way in which some people among them had become pawns in the hands of the enemy entailed that they be severely chastised. But since God is Gracious and Ever-Merciful, He gave them the opportunity to repent and mend their ways in spite of this mistake.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّتَّبِعْ خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ فَاِنَّهٗ يَاْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاۗءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۭ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ مَا زَكٰى مِنْكُمْ مِّنْ اَحَدٍ اَبَدًا ۙ وَّلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُزَكِّيْ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢١﴾[27]

This verse sounds a similar warning to the Muslims like the ones that have already been sounded before. Though this warning is general, it is meant to stress the directive

26. And were it not for God's grace and mercy upon you, and had not God been very Gracious and Ever-Merciful, you would have got caught in a calamity.

27. Believers! Do not follow the footsteps of Satan and he who follows the footsteps of Satan should remember that Satan always leads people to lewdness and evil. And had not God's grace and mercy been upon you, none of you could have ever become pure. In fact, it is God Who purifies whomsoever He wishes and God hears and knows all.

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that has already been mentioned earlier: they should not transmit information about whose veracity they are not sure of. What is without proof is mere conjecture and to follow conjecture is to follow Satan.

Consider next the words "And had not God's grace and mercy been upon you, none of you could have ever become pure. In fact, it is God Who purifies whomsoever He wishes." This again is another subtle warning. There are people who carelessly accept all kinds of baseless things that relate to the honour and integrity of others and on this basis make evil estimations about them. This attitude of such people shows that they have an excessively good opinion about their own selves – in fact, lay claim to spiritual advancement, whether they have any comprehension of their inner selves or not. These people are being informed of this hidden thief – people who accepted the rumour spread by the enemies without any condemnation. It is stated that everyone must remember that whoever attains purification does so merely because of God's grace. If His graciousness is not present, none can be purified. So no one should show such pride and vanity on his purity and piety that he accepts accusations on others without any investigation.

The words "God hears and knows all" remind people of the fact that a person who gives himself more allowance should not forget that God hears and knows all. He hears and knows the most hidden things of people.

وَ لَا يَأْتَلِ اُولُوا الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَ السَّعَةِ اَنْ يُّؤْتُوْٓا اُولِي الْقُرْبٰى وَ الْمَسٰكِيْنَ وَ الْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۖ وَ لْيَعْفُوْا وَ لْيَصْفَحُوْا ؕ اَلَا تُحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ يَّغْفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۲۲﴾[28]

This verse is co-ordinated to what is said earlier: believers are directed to forgive and forgo those who were so naive that they could not guage the severity of this mischief and became involved in narrating it. This directive was essential because once the reality became known, it was feared that many people would refrain from financially helping and patronizing those who played any role in spreading this slander. Narratives mention Misṭah (rta), a needy companion who was a relative of Abū Bakr (rta) and was also being financially provided by him. When it became known that he too had a share in spreading this propaganda, Abū Bakr (rta) was naturally very sad and swore that he would never help him in future. It was feared that other Muslims too would adopt the same attitude.

For this reason, the verse directs Muslims to refrain from this and forgive such people. Every person can make mistakes but God forgives people. If He starts punishing people for their faults and depriving them of His blessings, who can save himself from His accountability. Those who want God to forgive them for their

28. Those among you who are affluent and prosperous should not swear that they will not spend on the kindred, the needy and those who migrate for the cause of God. In fact, they should forgive and forgo. Do you not want God to forgive you? And God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

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mistakes should forgive others too for their faults. God is forgiving and ever-merciful and wants to see a reflection of his attributes in His servants.

The words "those among you who are affluent and prosperous" serve as a reminder of a responsibility: those who, in spite of their own shortcomings, have been granted prosperity in their livelihood by God are required by Him to deal generously with others and not withdraw from their help because of some mistake they have done.

The words "the kindred, the needy and those who migrate for the cause of God" express an obligation people owe to those mentioned: they should not be deprived of help and support merely because they have committed some mistake.

The words "Do you not want God to forgive you?" refer to the subtle reality alluded to by the previous verse. Just as making evil estimations about someone merely on the basis of rumours is an evidence to one's own excessive superiority, in fact a claim to self-purification, in a similar way not forgiving a person for his mistake and absolving one's self in supporting him is tantamount to thinking that one is flawless, even though a person may not be aware of this hidden thought. Viewed thus, a little deliberation shows that with regard to the philosophy of religion both these mistakes belong to the same category. Hence both are adjacently mentioned.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ الْغٰفِلٰتِ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ لُعِنُوا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۠ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ اَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَاَيْدِيهِمْ وَاَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ يُوَفِّيهِمُ اللّٰهُ دِينَهُمُ الْحَقَّ وَيَعْلَمُونَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٢٥﴾[29]

The word مُحْصَنٰتٌ here means chaste upright women and غٰفِلٰتٌ refers to innocent and virtuous women. Though these words are used in a general sense alluding to all decent and upright women of the Muslim society, they contain a subtle reference to 'Ā'ishah (rta). She was the most prominent person who could be referred to by these words.

The real meaning of the word رَمْيٌ is to throw an arrow, but it also means to accuse and to slander someone. There is a special eloquence in the use of this word for accusing innocent women. It alludes to the fact that those who do this in fact make such women a target of their arrows while they are sleeping. Such people who do this stand cursed both in this world and in the Hereafter. Neither will they succeed here nor there. In this world too they shall soon be uprooted and in the Hereafter they will nevertheless face a huge torment. Such was this curse of God on these hypocrites that ultimately when Islam became dominant all of them including their leaders were totally destroyed in the land of Arabia.

The day these people will face the huge torment of God neither will they be able to present any excuse nor will any external evidence be needed to prove their crime. On

29. Indeed, those who accuse chaste upright believing women stand cursed both in this world and in the Hereafter, and for them is a great torment. On the day, when their tongues, hands and feet shall bear witness before them to their deeds. On that day God will give to them in full the retribution they deserve and they shall know that only God is the truth and One Who explains.

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that day, their tongues, hands and feet will bear witness against them. Today they can hide their conspiracies and connivances but no misdeed of theirs can remain hidden from their tongues, hands and feet. God will be able to procure the evidence of these witnesses regarding the slander and evil they spread.

The word دِيْنٌ in يَوْمَئِذٍ يُّوَفِّيْهِمُ اللّٰهُ دِيْنَهُمُ الْحَقَّ means "retribution."

The words "they shall know that only God is the truth and One Who explains" refer to the fact that today many things are hidden, as a result of which these people have many misconceptions about God. They do not have conviction that God is truth and justice in entirety which entails that He will definitely make the truth dominant and obliterate evil. They also do not have conviction that He is able to explain everything. These misconceptions had made them very clever in their pranks. However, on that day, it will become fully evident to them that God is a personification of truth and justice and at the same time One Who unveils all facts.

اَلْخَبِيْثٰتُ لِلْخَبِيْثِيْنَ وَالْخَبِيْثُوْنَ لِلْخَبِيْثٰتِ ۚ وَالطَّيِّبٰتُ لِلطَّيِّبِيْنَ وَالطَّيِّبُوْنَ لِلطَّيِّبٰتِ ۚ اُولٰٓئِكَ مُبَرَّءُوْنَ مِمَّا يَقُوْلُوْنَ ؕ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّرِزْقٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿۲۶﴾[30]

The implication of this verse is that in this world the truth is hidden and pebbles and pearls are intermixed. However, when the Day of Reckoning arrives people will be divided into categories on the basis of faith and morality, as is referred to by verse 7 of Sūrah al-Takwīr. Thus as the above verse says good men and good women, and evil men and evil women will be grouped together. On that day, the good ones will be totally acquitted of the nonesical things being hatched against them and for them will be forgiveness and an honourable sustenance. At another instance, it has been pointed out that these two things comprehensively cover all the favours of the Hereafter.

Section IV: Verses (27-34)

In these verses, directives are given to prevent disorder in the society that leads to lustful stares, accusations and moral misconduct. In this regard, first of all certain restrictions are imposed on the freedom that existed in pre-Islamic *jāhiliyyah* society regarding visiting one another in houses. After that, it is said that widows and able-minded and able-bodied slaves must be married off so that the miscreants are not able to spread evil. In this regard, the generous law of *mukatābat* has been revealed and people are urged to financially help the slaves so that they too have the status of free of individuals, their moral standard is raised and on the basis of faith, harmony and

30. Evil women shall be for evil men and evil men shall be for evil women. And pure women shall be for pure men and pure men shall be for pure women. These people shall be acquitted from the evil things they say. For them are forgiveness and sustenance of honour.

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unity are produced in the society.

Readers may now study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوْتِكُمْ حَتّٰى تَسْتَاْنِسُوْا وَتُسَلِّمُوْا عَلٰٓى اَهْلِهَا ۭ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَجِدُوْا فِيْهَآ اَحَدًا فَلَا تَدْخُلُوْهَا حَتّٰى يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ قِيْلَ لَكُمُ ارْجِعُوْا فَارْجِعُوْا هُوَ اَزْكٰى لَكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ اَنْ تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتًا غَيْرَ مَسْكُوْنَةٍ فِيْهَا مَتَاعٌ لَّكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُوْنَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ قُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ يَغُضُّوْا مِنْ اَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوْا فُرُوْجَهُمْ ۭ ذٰلِكَ اَزْكٰى لَهُمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا يَصْنَعُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَقُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنٰتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ اَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوْجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِيْنَ زِيْنَتَهُنَّ اِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلٰي جُيُوْبِهِنَّ ۠ وَلَا يُبْدِيْنَ زِيْنَتَهُنَّ اِلَّا لِبُعُوْلَتِهِنَّ اَوْ اٰبَاۗىِٕهِنَّ اَوْ اٰبَاۗءِ بُعُوْلَتِهِنَّ اَوْ اَبْنَاۗىِٕهِنَّ اَوْ اَبْنَاۗءِ بُعُوْلَتِهِنَّ اَوْ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ اَوْ بَنِيْٓ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ اَوْ بَنِيْٓ اَخَوٰتِهِنَّ اَوْ نِسَاۗىِٕهِنَّ اَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُنَّ اَوِ التّٰبِعِيْنَ غَيْرِ اُولِي الْاِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ اَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوْا عَلٰي عَوْرٰتِ النِّسَاۗءِ ۠ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِاَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِيْنَ مِنْ زِيْنَتِهِنَّ ۭ وَتُوْبُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا اَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَاَنْكِحُوا الْاَيَامٰى مِنْكُمْ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَاِمَاۗىِٕكُمْ ۭ اِنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا فُقَرَاۗءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَلْيَسْتَعْفِفِ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ نِكَاحًا حَتّٰى يُغْنِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۭ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَبْتَغُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ فَكَاتِبُوْهُمْ اِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ فِيْهِمْ خَيْرًا ۠ وَّاٰتُوْهُمْ مِّنْ مَّالِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْٓ اٰتٰىكُمْ ۭ وَلَا تُكْرِهُوْا فَتَيٰتِكُمْ عَلَى الْبِغَاۗءِ اِنْ اَرَدْنَ تَحَصُّنًا لِّتَبْتَغُوْا عَرَضَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۭ وَمَنْ يُّكْرِهْهُّنَّ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اِكْرَاهِهِنَّ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتٍ مُّبَيِّنٰتٍ وَّمَثَلًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾

Believers! Do not enter houses of other people except your own until you have introduced yourselves and said *salām* to those in them. It is this way which will earn you blessings so that you may be reminded. Thus if you do not find anyone in these houses, do not enter them until permission is given to you. And if you are asked to go back, return. It is this way which is pure for you and God is well aware of all that you

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do. And there is no restriction on you to enter these non-residential places in which there is some benefit for you. And God has knowledge of what you reveal and what you conceal. (27-29)

Tell the believers that they should restrain their eyes and hide their private parts. This way is pure way for them. Indeed, God is aware of whatever they do. And tell believing women that they also should restrain their eyes and guard their private parts and not display of their embellishments except those which cannot be concealed and they should draw their coverings over their chest and necklines. And they should not let their embellishments be exposed to anyone except their husbands or their fathers or their husbands' fathers or their sons or their husbands' sons or their brothers or their brothers' sons or their sisters' sons or their women of acquaintance or their slaves or the subservient male servants who are not drawn towards women or to those children who as yet have no awareness of the hidden aspects of women. And women should not walk by stamping their feet on the ground so that their hidden ornaments become known. And Believers! All of you turn to God in repentance so that you may prosper. (30-31)

And wed your single men and single women and also your able slave-men and slave-women. If they are poor, God will make them rich out of His grace and God has great capacity and has knowledge. And those who do not find the means to marry should restrain themselves until God provides them out of His grace. And those of your slaves who ask for *mukātabat*, grant it to them if you find them able and give them out of the wealth which God has given to you. And do not force your slave-women to prostitution merely to obtain some benefit for your worldly life when they want to remain chaste. And he who forces them, then after this compulsion God is Most Gracious and Ever-Merciful. And indeed We have also revealed to you radiant verses and recited to you the parable also of those people also who passed before you and counsel too for those who fear God. (32-34)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوْتِكُمْ حَتّٰى تَسْتَاْنِسُوْا وَتُسَلِّمُوْا عَلٰٓى اَهْلِهَا ۭ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾[31]

The word اِسْتِيْنَاسٌ means "to be introduced." The word بُيُوْت refers to residential houses – as explained in the next verse – where a person's family lives. The verse says that Muslims should not barge in the houses of other people if need be. They should first introduce themselves and the decent way of this introduction is to say *salām* to its residents by standing at the door. If they receive a response and are granted permission, only then they should enter the house, otherwise they should return.

Saying *salām* is a very gracious way to introduce one's self and to seek permission

31. Believers! Do not enter houses of other people except your own until you have introduced yourselves and said *salām* to those in them. It is this way which will earn you blessings so that you may be reminded.

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for entering a house. In fact, in the verse saying *salām* occurs as an explanation of how one should introduce one's self. Obviously through this greeting the residents will come to know of the identity of the person and his purpose of coming; whether it is appropriate for him to enter and if the time is suitable for this.

Seeking permission to enter a house in some way or the other is a tradition found in every civilized nation. Amongst the nobility of the Arab *jāhiliyyah* this tradition also existed; in fact, the words that were used for this had almost the same meaning as the ones used today in our western countries or those influenced by them. Islam, however, did not adopt them and directed people to pronounce *salām* for this purpose. The way taught by the Prophet (sws) to do this was that a person should say this word at the front door and, in the absence of any answer, he could repeat it three times and then return.

After this restriction was imposed, obviously any possibility of an inappropriate person to enter at an unsuitable time into an area of the house where women resided was done away with. After this, only those people could enter the house who were either related to the head of the family or were fully trusted by him.

The words "it is this way which will earn you blessings so that you may be reminded" explain the benefit of this restriction so that it may not be seem a burden to people. In other words, this word is like a blessed reminder to the person who is visiting that he is intruding into the privacy of someone where he must follow certain decorum. At the same time, the residents of the house are also informed that this visit by a person entails certain restrictions abiding by which will earn them the blessings and benefits of this word and the next.

فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَجِدُوْا فِيْهَآ اَحَدًا فَلَا تَدْخُلُوْهَا حَتّٰى يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ قِيْلَ لَكُمُ ارْجِعُوْا فَارْجِعُوْا هُوَ اَزْكٰى لَكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۲۸﴾[32]

The verse implies that if after seeking permission, it becomes evident that there is no one in the house to grant it, a person must not enter unless permission is granted, and if he is asked to go back, he should do so.

The words "it is this way which is pure for you" imply that although this refusal weighs down heavily on a person, yet this only is the decent way as far as morality is concerned. One cannot know the circumstances of this refusal. In such matters, he should keep in mind the convenience of the residents rather than his own ego, for this secures him from the machinations of Satan an constitutes a wise counsel.

The sentence وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ عَلِيْمٌ occurs here repeatedly with a light change of words. In the succeeding verse, it is said: وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُوْنَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُوْنَ. After that the words used are: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا يَصْنَعُوْنَ. The attribute of God's knowledge occurs constantly in them. This frequent reminder is being sounded because what is being asked to be abstained from is something for which there are many subterfuges found in one's inner-self. Unless

32. Thus if you do not find anyone in these houses, do not enter them until permission is given to you. And if you are asked to go back, return. It is this way which is pure for you and God is well aware of all that you do.

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one is fully aware and cognizant of God's absolute knowledge, mere directives and commands will not be able to plug these fissures. Satan finds one way or the other and a person succumbs to his guiles. However, if a person's heart is always overwhelmed with the concept that God is watching all the time, it will protect a person from the most concealed ploys of Satan.

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ اَنْ تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتًا غَيْرَ مَسْكُوْنَةٍ فِيْهَا مَتَاعٌ لَّكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُوْنَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُوْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾[33]

Concomitant indications show that the expression غَيْرَ مَسْكُوْنَةٍ refers to non-residential places where one's family is not living. It is evident from the above directives that the restriction of seeking permission has primarily been imposed so that eyes can be restrained and no chance of any accusation may arise. Thus this restriction is not essential for places which are non-residential. A person can enter them without seeking permission. However, this entry is qualified by another restriction: there should be some benefit or need associated to this. Thus, places of general need like shops, travel lodges and hotels etc. are examples of such places. Included also are male meeting places.

The sentence "and God has knowledge of what you reveal and what you conceal" is a warning similar to what has already been mentioned earlier. The reason for this warning is that if a person is not fully aware and conscious of the extent of God's knowledge, he can take undue advantage of this freedom. Thus it may well happen that a person barges into the female compound of a house and when this is objected to, he puts forth the excuse that he thought this was the male compound.

قُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ يَغُضُّوْا مِنْ اَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوْا فُرُوْجَهُمْ ؕ ذٰلِكَ اَزْكٰى لَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا يَصْنَعُوْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾[34]

Once permission is sought and a person enters a house, he is asked to follow certain norms, as mentioned in this verse. It is evident from the expression قُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ that restraining the eyes and guarding the private parts is a requisite of faith. Also evident from مِنْ of مِنْ اَبْصَارِهِمْ is that the purpose is to lower the gaze to the extent that they do not take undue liberty regarding the women of the house because this directive has actually been given while keeping them in consideration. It is evident from this that this permission by given by the Qur'ān to enter houses where women are present is given only to provide relief regarding the relatives and people of trust of the head of the house. This is specially because not everyone's house in those times had a male compound and neither can this be the case today. However, these directives themselves are a proof that if a house has a place where men can sit separately, then

33. And there is no restriction on you to enter these non-residential places in which there is some benefit for you. And God has knowledge of what you reveal and what you conceal.

34. Tell the believers that they should restrain their eyes and hide their private parts. This way is pure way for them. Indeed, God is aware of whatever they do.

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except for close relatives, Islam requires that other men should sit separately. This will become evident from the verses ahead.

The directive of restraining the eyes is a very important one because it is the eyes that form the first connection between men and women. If a person observes this directive honestly, he remains secure from many a mischief of Satan.

Guarding private parts can best be achieved by wearing decent clothes. Such are the innovations of fashion these days that the real purpose of dress – hiding the body – has totally vanished. The only purpose left is embellishment and that too which is horrible in nature. Earlier one would lament these ill-ways of women; however, now even men have started to wear attires that should not be worn in a decent gathering, let alone wearing them while visiting the house of a believer.

Consider next the words "This way is pure way for them. Indeed, God is aware of whatever they do." They refer to the fact that these precautions in houses are very important and lofty with regard to moral purity; however, this can only be the case when a person observes these precautions while fully keeping mind that God is aware of even the most secretive deeds of people. If this is not so, then a person's eyes cannot be restrained nor can he have the will to hide his private parts.

وَقُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنٰتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ اَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوْجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِيْنَ زِيْنَتَهُنَّ اِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلٰى جُيُوْبِهِنَّ ۖ وَلَا يُبْدِيْنَ زِيْنَتَهُنَّ اِلَّا لِبُعُوْلَتِهِنَّ اَوْ اٰبَآئِهِنَّ اَوْ اٰبَآءِ بُعُوْلَتِهِنَّ اَوْ اَبْنَآئِهِنَّ اَوْ اَبْنَآءِ بُعُوْلَتِهِنَّ اَوْ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ اَوْ بَنِيْٓ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ اَوْ بَنِيْٓ اَخَوٰتِهِنَّ اَوْ نِسَآئِهِنَّ اَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُنَّ اَوِ التّٰبِعِيْنَ غَيْرِ اُولِي الْاِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ اَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوْا عَلٰى عَوْرٰتِ النِّسَآءِ ۖ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِاَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِيْنَ مِنْ زِيْنَتِهِنَّ ۭ وَتُوْبُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا اَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾[35]

These verses direct women to lower their gazes as well if a non-*maḥram* person enters the house, to guard their private parts and to not display their adornments before him except those that cannot be concealed. The verses then provide a list of individuals before which women can display their adornments. They end on telling women to walk

35. And tell believing women that they also should restrain their eyes and guard their private parts and not display of their embellishments except those which cannot be concealed and they should draw their coverings over their chest and necklines. And they should not let their embellishments be exposed to anyone except their husbands or their fathers or their husbands' fathers or their sons or their husbands' sons or their brothers or their brothers' sons or their sisters' sons or their women of acquaintance or their slaves or the subservient male servants who are not drawn towards women or to those children who as yet have no awareness of the hidden aspects of women. And women should not walk by stamping their feet on the ground so that their hidden ornaments become known. And Believers! All of you turn to God in repentance so that you may prosper.

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not in manner that attracts attention to the adornments they may be wearing.

This is a simple understanding of the verse. Certain parts that need explaining are dealt below.

Adornments (*zīnat*) include dress as well as jewellery. Neither can each of these things be totally concealed nor must all are to be revealed. The outward part of the dress will have to be revealed and some jewellery too – especially of the hands – cannot be concealed without bother. Thus the exception in "not display of their embellishments except those which cannot be concealed" has given a concession to women from making extra-ordinary efforts to hide adornments that cannot be easily hidden. The verse only asks them to hide those adornments that can be done so without much botheration.

Consider next the words "and they should draw their coverings over their chest and necklines." The Arabic word *khimār* means a shawl or covering. One thing which becomes evident from this is that a covering is an essential part of a woman's dress. The second thing which is evident from this is that in the presence of a non-*maḥram*, it is essential that women hide their chests and necklines besides their heads and backs.[36] Readers may well reflect on this directive on the one hand and on the glamorous women of our times. They have discarded these coverings regarding them to be relics of the old-fashioned past and brazenly display their chests.

اَوْ اٰبَآئِهِنَّ (of their fathers) includes paternal uncles, father and grandfather. Only the most prominent of *maḥram* relatives are enumerated but include all those which this directive encompasses.

Some jurists say that only Muslim women are included in اَوْ نِسَآئِهِنَّ (or their women). This opinion does not seem to be correct. In my view, what is expressed by al-Zamakhsharī in this regard is more correct. He is of the opinion that this refers to women of acquaintance and service.[37] It should be kept in mind that displaying ornaments before all types of women who are strangers is not without its hazards. Some women are very clever in this regard and it is best to remain secure from their guiles.

The expression اَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُنَّ implies both slave-men and slave-women. Had only slave-women been implied by this expression, then the appropriate words would have been اَوْ اِمَآءِهِنَّ. A common expression that connotes both slave-men and slave-women would never have been used. Moreover, the verses already mention the category which as, has been explained, includes both women with whom one is generally acquainted as well as slave-women and maidservants. After a mention of this category, an independent mention of slave-women is needless. Moreover, this inference is also against certain explicit injunctions of the Qur'ān. Further ahead in the

36. Old women who have passed marriageable age are exempt from this restriction even though it is better that they still abide by it. This is stated in verse 60 ahead which was revealed later as an explanation of this verse.

37. His words are: من فی صحبتهن وخدمتهنّ من الحرائر .Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāff*, vol. 3, 236.

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sūrah, some explanatory verses that were revealed later occur. In these verses, both slave-men and slave-women are permitted to enter houses without permission except on three occasions and the reason for this (see verse 58) is طَوّٰفُوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ (you come and go among yourselves at all times). For this reason, I regard the view of those jurists to be correct who include both slave-men and slave-women in this directive. However, they will be required to abide by the restriction which the Qur'ān itself has stated and which is explained in verse 58 ahead. However, this discussion is now merely for academic purposes because slavery has been abolished from this world and for this the very first step was historically taken by Islam. Details are forthcoming. In current times, the issue is not that of slaves but of servants and attendants. What is evident from the insinuations of the Qur'ān is that as far as old servants and children are concerned, they are permitted to enter houses without permission except on three occasions, as will be explained later. As far as adult servants are concerned, in my opinion, it is essential for them to abide by all the restrictions mentioned above. It is essential for them to seek permission before entering the house and in their presence in the house they as well as women of the house must also observe the limits referred to verses under discussion.

The اَوِ التّٰبِعِيْنَ غَيْرِ اُولِى الْاِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ expression refers to old, handicapped, blind and lame men who no longer have sexual desires. If among such men, there are some who are being provided for by the family of the house and they also live there, then the above mentioned restrictions do not apply to them as well. In my opinion, old servants should also be classified in this category. However, they must seek permission on three occasions which is mentioned in verse 58 ahead.

The words اَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوْا عَلٰى عَوْرٰتِ النِّسَآءِ refer to children who do not have awareness about sex as yet, and they do not feel attracted to the sexual organs of a woman the way men are. Initially, they were not required to take permission but later they were also asked to seek permission on three occasions. Details are forthcoming.

Consider now the words: وَ لَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِاَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِيْنَ مِنْ زِيْنَتِهِنَّ. The real motive in wearing ornaments is to show and display them. Though this urge is found in every human being especially women, it has a specific sphere. It is not permitted by Islam to show off one's adornments at every place, the way glamorous women of today do. For this reason, it is stated that if in the presence of non-maḥrams a woman needs to walk about in the house, she should not stamp her feet on the ground so that the ringing of jewellery is heard.

Since the last part of the verse: وَ تُوْبُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا اَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ is directed to the reformation of the whole Muslim society, it addresses everyone to turn towards God: everyone should try to mend their ways and adopt the life recommended by the Qur'ān. This alone is the way of success. The conditions of success are stated in verse 76 of Sūrah al-Ḥajj and verse 1 of Sūrah al-Mu'munūn. Readers can look them up.

It is evident from the context that the directives which are given in the previous

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verses to men and women relate to observing dress code within the house. The answer to the nature of this observance when a woman has to step out of her house is given in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb and not here. *Insha'Allāh*, there a detailed discussion will be done. Nevertheless, I have also written a booklet titled *Qur'ān and Pardah* in which I have explained in the light of the Qur'ān that in both these situations definite directives of dress-code for women are given by the Book of God. Those who require details can look it up. After these explicit directives, those who are not able to find such directives in the Qur'ān can only be deemed as people who instead of restraining their eyes from the opposite gender are guilty of restraining them from the Qur'ān. These people kiss the Qur'ān with great religious fervour but with eyes closed and after kissing it they abandon it thinking that it is a heavy burden for them to lift.

وَاَنْكِحُوا الْاَيَامٰى مِنْكُمْ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَاِمَآئِكُمْ ؕ اِنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا فُقَرَآءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۳۲﴾[38]

The word اَيَامٰى is the plural of اَيِّمٌ. It refers to a husband who does not have a wife and also to woman who does not have a husband. In its broader meaning, it is also used for men and women who are left unmarried.

The word صٰلِحِيْنَ refers to those who are able both with regard to their physical strength and moral conduct. In Arabic, this word is also used in this comprehensive meaning also.

A wide fissure left in the society for moral evils and Satan's luring to infiltrate into is the existence of men and women who are not married. This increases the possibility of illicit relations and miscreants are afforded with an opportunity to spread slander. Just as poverty is a source of people not being able to marry, similarly, in some cases, customs of families, extended families and tribes have a pivotal role in this evil. This is especially true in the case of women. In some families, marrying off widows is considered to be an anathema. Obviously, such shortcomings cannot be reformed unless the society has sensitivity towards it. For this reason, the Qur'ān has given this directive. Its implication is that the society must be conducive to it, must root out adverse notions and encourage and help the poor so that they also are placed in the society in accordance with merit. As a result, evils which result in people not being tied in the marriage bond are curbed.

Similarly, the society is asked to wed able-bodied and morally sound slave-men and slave-women. "Able-bodied" here means that they are able to discharge their responsibilities and understand their rights and obligations. This directive has been given to raise the moral and social status of slaves and gradually they become part of free men and women.

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38. And wed your single men and single women and also your able slave-men and slave-women. If they are poor, God will make them rich out of His grace and God has great capacity and has knowledge.

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Consider next the words: "If they are poor, God will make them rich out of His grace." It has been pointed out above that the general reason for men to not being able to marry is poverty. A poor man in the first place does not feel up to taking up the responsibility of a family, and even if he feels up to it, women are not ready to marry such a person. To remove this hindrance, God has given glad tidings that those who are poor and others too should rest assured that marriage does not increase poverty. It increases God's grace and sustenance. A person who marries to safeguard his faith and character is looked upon with favour by God and is helped by Him. As long as a person does not have a wife, his life is more like a nomad and many of his abilities remain shrunk and dormant. Similarly, as long as a woman is unmarried, she resembles a creeper which is not able to grow and flourish owing to want of support. But once a woman has a husband and a man has a wife, their abilities develop and increase, and when both of them start to strive in life together, the Almighty blesses them in their struggle and their circumstances also change for the better.

The words "God has great capacity and has knowledge" are meant to emphasize the glad tidings just given. God is fully aware of the needs and circumstances of everyone.

وَلْيَسْتَعْفِفِ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ نِكَاحًا حَتّٰى يُغْنِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَبْتَغُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ فَكَاتِبُوْهُمْ اِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ فِيْهِمْ خَيْرًا ۖ وَّاٰتُوْهُمْ مِّنْ مَّالِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْٓ اٰتٰىكُمْ ؕ وَلَا تُكْرِهُوْا فَتَيٰتِكُمْ عَلَى الْبِغَآءِ اِنْ اَرَدْنَ تَحَصُّنًا لِّتَبْتَغُوْا عَرَضَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ؕ وَمَنْ يُّكْرِهْهُّنَّ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اِكْرَاهِهِنَّ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۳۳﴾[39]

The previous directive was meant for the society. However, this does not absolve an individual of his moral responsibilities. He must restrain himself and wait for God's grace. A person who strives to protect his faith and character will find God opening new avenues for him. This is evident from the words of the verse.

Consider next the part: وَالَّذِيْنَ يَبْتَغُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ. The word كِتٰب or مکاتبت is a term. It means that a slave seeks his emancipation from his master by paying him a certain amount in a specific period of time or carry out a specific task for him. After this, the master must liberate him. In this case, the directive is that the slave must be made a *mukātib*. Scholars generally regard this directive to be recommendatory. However, 'Umar (rta), Ibn Sīrīn and Dā'ūd regard it to be imperative. In their opinion, it is obligatory for the master to make such a slave a *mukātib.* I agree with this view. These directives are being given to the society, as is indicated earlier. For this reason,

39. And those who do not find the means to marry should restrain themselves until God provides them out of His grace. And those of your slaves who ask for *mukātabat*, grant it to them if you find them able and give them out of the wealth which God has given to you. And do not force your slave-women to prostitution merely to obtain some benefit for your worldly life when they want to remain chaste. And he who forces them, then after this compulsion God is Most Gracious and Ever-Merciful.

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this does not invest the master with full authority. He becomes a party to a case. If a slave and his master mutually settle this matter, it is fine; otherwise, if some dispute arises, then those responsible for the society will settle it. If the need still remains, then the matter will be decided by a court of law.

The words اِنۡ عَلِمۡتُمۡ فِيۡهِمۡ خَيۡرًا show that a slave owner should see if his slave has the ability and the will to fulfil the commitment he has made with him. This condition was imposed because it was possible that a slave demands *mukātabat* from his master, but has no ability to work, and he uses this plight to ask for monetary help from people and even make it a pretext to take to beggary as a profession; in this way, he could have become a burden on the society. The reason that this outcome was feared was that once a slave became a *mukātib*, as is mentioned ahead, the Qur'ān had directed people to generously help him and this monetary assistance should also be provided to him from the public treasury so that he is able to pay the money of *mukātabat.* Obviously, this option could have produced the desire to become *mukātib* in those slaves also who did not have capacity or ability to work and make an effort themselves, ultimately becoming a burden on the society. Moreover, if they were not able to fulfil the conditions of the agreement, they would have definitely become a source of clash and dispute.

However, it should be kept in mind that this condition could not have become a hindrance in the liberation of a capable slave. This is because even in his case the final verdict, in case of dispute, rested with the society and the court of law. If a slave complained that his master was becoming a hindrance in his freedom by making this condition as an excuse even though he was fully capable of becoming a *mukātib*, he could also take his case to the elders of the society and even to a court of law if needed.

The words "and give them out of the wealth which God has given to you" urge the society to spend generously and courageously from the wealth God has blessed them with on all slaves who want obtain freedom. This exhortation is meant for the affluent and the words of the verse cited are meant to rouse their sense of gratitude: they should not hesitate to spend from what God has given them for His own the cause. It is evident from this that those who spend for this purpose will in fact be spending for the cause of God.

It may be kept in mind that our earliest authorities are unanimous that such slaves can be helped through *zakāh* money and through the public treasury. As has been mentioned in verse 60 of Sūrah al-Tawbah, a special head has been fixed in the public treasury for the liberation of slaves

Just as Islam has given this right of *mukātabat* to slave-men, it has also given it to slave-women. The general nature of the words مِّمَّا مَلَكَتۡ اَيۡمَانُكُمۡ encompasses both genders and the practice of the Prophet (sws) and his companions also endorses this. The incidents of Barīrah (rta) and Juwayriyah are mentioned in narratives as examples.

After the revelation of this law, it became largely possible for all capable slave-men

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and slave-women to be emancipated. After this, only those slaves remained who were either content on their circumstances or did not have the ability to work and make themselves useful in the society. Obviously, if a general proclamation of liberation of such slave-men and slave-women had been made, the result would be that they would have been deprived of the support of their masters and would not have been able to support themselves too, making them a burden on the society.

Consider next the words: وَ لَا تُكْرِهُوْا فَتَيٰتِكُمْ عَلَى الْبِغَآءِ اِنْ اَرَدْنَ تَحَصُّنًا لِّتَبْتَغُوْا عَرَضَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا. The word فَتَيٰت here is used for "slave-women" and the purpose of using this word for them is to increase their status and respect in the society. فَتَاةٌ is the feminine of فَتیٰ. Just as the latter means a young boy, the former means a young girl. Obviously, this change of word for slave-men and slave-women is a part of the reformatory measures adopted to raise their social standing in the society and mentioned earlier. The purpose of changing this word was to engender self-esteem in them and to direct the attention of people to change their conceptions about them and regard them from their own brethren.

The qualifying words اِنْ اَرَدْنَ تَحَصُّنًا (when they want to remain chaste) are not a condition; they depict a situation. When Islam imposed regarded fornication to be a punishable crime, directed the society to marry off slave-men and slave-women and opened up for them a very convenient way to liberate themselves, it was but natural for this sentiment to develop in slave-women that they must raise their moral standard. Those among them who were forced to adopt prostitution by their masters must have wished to lead a chaste life. It was very natural that this sentiment rise in them in the period of reformation they were passing through. However, this directly dented the interest of these masters. This id because it is through these slave-women that they ran slave-dens in the times of *jāhiliyyah* and would benefit from their income. Some of them had continued with this practice in secret even after the arrival of Islam, as has been alluded to earlier. The famous hypocrite 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy, who had instigated the incident of *ifk*, also ran a similar den. Its references are found in history. It is obvious that such filthy people would never have liked to release their slave-women. Thus they used all ill-means to stop them from leading chaste lives. This verse addresses them in this background. God will forgive these women if they are forced to prostitution but he will not forgive their masters who are playing this heinous role. They should contemplate their fate. Here, it may be kept in mind that certain people who ran prostitution-dens were stoned to death at the Prophet's directive in later phases, as has been referred to earlier.

وَلَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتٍ مُّبَيِّنٰتٍ وَّ مَثَلًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَ مَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾[40]

This again is a warning the likes of which repeatedly occur in this *sūrah*. Examples

40. And indeed We have also revealed to you radiant verses and recited to you the parable also of those people also who passed before you and counsel too for those who fear God.

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of it can be seen in the earlier verses and another one is found in verse 46 ahead. While explaining the very first verse, I have already indicated the wisdom for this repetition. The words "and recited to you the parable also of those people also who passed before you" allude to the parable which is mentioned in verse 35 ahead and which will be elucidated later.

The implication of the verse under discussion is that people who have no fear of God, no explanation or counsel or advice has any effect on them. They will encounter their fate themselves.

Gradual Elimination of Slavery

The guidance that has been provided by the previous section has been explained under the respective verses. However, I would like to comprehensively state the teachings regarding slavery that have been referred to earlier at various instances. The purpose is to dispel misconceptions about it found in the minds of people.

Slavery was never a part of Islam. It was tolerated temporarily keeping in view the international and national circumstances of those times. The reason was that a sudden order of termination of this institution would have given an opportunity to the enemies and at same time created many social and economic problems within the society. In those times, in the first place, the conventional way to resolve the issue of prisoners of war was that they were made slaves by the victors. Secondly, there were extensive slave-markets in which they were bought and sold. As a result, most households had slave-men and slave-women of various ages. In these circumstances, if a single order of their liberation had been given, not withstanding the advantage the enemies may have taken, a big question related to they becoming a useful part of the society. A very large number among them were slaves who could not economically support themselves. As slaves, their masters would bear their burden by law. Once set free, the only option left for them would be to take to beggary and become a burden on the society. The issue of slave-women was even more grave. Withdrawal of support from them could have created many moral evils. The public treasury obviously was not in a position to financially support all of them. For this reason, Islam adopted a certain way to liberate these slaves. It ensured that these envisaged problems and evils would not arise and for this employed a gradual strategy of emancipating able slaves to make them a useful part of the society.

It is not possible to mention all the details of this strategy, which may require a whole book. However, I will point to some fundamental measures that were adopted in this regard to gradually bring the slaves at par with free men and women.

1. The first step that was taken in this regard was that at the very start of the Makkan period; liberation of slaves (*fakku raqabah*) was regarded to be a great virtue (90:13). In this referred to verse, it is mentioned adjacent to feeding of the poor and in some verses it is regarded as the first step to grace, especially for the rich.

2. Not only did the Prophet (sws) explicitly ask people to treat slaves in a very kind

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way but regarded their rights which their masters owed to them as part of the *sharī'ah*. This put an end to the authoritative and tyrannical hold of their masters on them which they had in the times of *jāhiliyyah*.

3. For the expiation of some crimes and sins, liberation of slaves was prescribed. This liberation was also regarded as an act of charity.

4. It was directed that all capable slave-men and slave-women should be wedded.

5. An independent head was fixed in public treasury and *zakāh* for the liberation of slaves in order to give great impetus to this campaign of slave emancipation.

6. After fornication had been outlawed as a crime, prostitution-dens – set up masters to force slave-women to this sin – were done away with. If someone tried to continue with this business secretively, he was given an exemplary punishment. So much so, some men and women guilty of this crime were stoned to death at the behest of the Prophet (sws).

7. Instead of using the humiliating words of عَبْدٌ and أَمةٌ for slave-men and slave-women, people were asked to use the word فَتٰى and فَتَاةٌ for them so that age-old conceptions about them should change.

8. Regarding the prisoners of war too, the policy was adopted that though certain prominent leaders were executed but others were released with or without ransom.

9. Finally, *mukātabat* was given a legal status. After this, it became very easy for all able slave-man and slave-woman to become free. As referred to earlier, people were urged to help and support them regarding their freedom from their masters, and for this a head was fixed in the public treasury. This law practically abolished slavery. After this, only those slaves remained who were not able to work and make themselves useful for the society. This option was not only best for them but also for the society otherwise they would have become a burden and would have been forced to adopt beggary as a profession.

Arguments in favour of all these measures are found in detail in the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. I can present them but this may prolong the discussion. So I have contented myself to these brief points. In fact, earlier on, arguments regarding most of these measures have already been referred to. And if some of them remain, people of knowledge can easily understand them in the light of what has already been presented.

Section V: Verses (35-40)

Coming up are verses which shine like the radiant sun in this *sūrah*. They cast their shadow on all its constituents. The parable of belief and disbelief is mentioned in them. The radiance of faith in the inner and outer self of a person becomes evident through it. Described are the deeds which manifest themselves in the individual and collective lives of people as a result of this faith. Similarly, the darkness that engulfs the inner and outer self of a person because of disbelief is portrayed, and how

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ultimately it destroys the individual and collective lives of people. The purpose of presenting these parables to the believers is to urge them to adopt the path faith in every sphere of their lives. For the disbelievers, the purpose is that if they want to remain buried in layers upon layers of the darkness of disbelief and would not like to come into the light spread by faith, they should contemplate their fate.

Readers may now study the verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

اَللّٰهُ نُوْرُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ مَثَلُ نُوْرِهٖ كَمِشْكٰوةٍ فِيْهَا مِصْبَاحٌ ؕ اَلْمِصْبَاحُ فِيْ زُجَاجَةٍ ؕ اَلزُّجَاجَةُ كَاَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ
دُرِّيٌّ يُّوْقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُّبٰرَكَةٍ زَيْتُوْنَةٍ لَّا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَّلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ ۙ يَّكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيْٓءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ ؕ نُوْرٌ عَلٰى
نُوْرٍ ؕ يَهْدِى اللّٰهُ لِنُوْرِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَيَضْرِبُ اللّٰهُ الْاَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۳۵﴾ فِيْ بُيُوْتٍ اَذِنَ
اللّٰهُ اَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيْهَا اسْمُهٗ ۙ يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ فِيْهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْاٰصَالِ ﴿۳۶﴾ رِجَالٌ ۙ لَّا تُلْهِيْهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَّلَا بَيْعٌ
عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَاِقَامِ الصَّلٰوةِ وَاِيْتَآءِ الزَّكٰوةِ ۙ يَخَافُوْنَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيْهِ الْقُلُوْبُ وَالْاَبْصَارُ ﴿۳۷﴾ لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ
اَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوْا وَيَزِيْدَهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿۳۸﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَعْمَالُهُمْ
كَسَرَابٍۢ بِقِيْعَةٍ يَّحْسَبُهُ الظَّمْاٰنُ مَآءً ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءَهٗ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْـًٔا وَّوَجَدَ اللّٰهَ عِنْدَهٗ فَوَفّٰىهُ حِسَابَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿۳۹﴾ اَوْ كَظُلُمٰتٍ فِيْ بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍّ يَّغْشٰهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهٖ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهٖ سَحَابٌ ؕ ظُلُمٰتٌۢ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ
بَعْضٍ ؕ اِذَآ اَخْرَجَ يَدَهٗ لَمْ يَكَدْ يَرٰىهَا ؕ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ نُوْرًا فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ نُّوْرٍ ﴿۴۰﴾

God only is the light of the heavens and the earth. The example of this light of faith in the heart is as if there is a niche which has a lamp. The lamp is in crystal. The crystal is like a shining star. The lamp is lit up by oil that comes from a lush olive tree which is neither eastern nor western. Its oil is so transparent as if it will light up even without fire touching it. Light upon light. God grants the light of His guidance to whomsoever He wills. And God states these parables to guide people and God is aware of everything – These niches are found in houses about which God has directed that they be built and His name be mentioned in them. In it, those people glorify Him morning and evening whom neither trade nor sale purchase divert from God's remembrance, diligence in the prayer and from paying *zakāh*. They keep fearing the day in which hearts and eyes will be anxious so that God gives them the best reward of their deeds and gives them more out of His grace. And God will give immeasurably to whomsoever He desires. (35-38)

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And those who disbelieved, the parable of their deeds is as if there is a mirage in a desolate desert which the thirsty regards to be water until when he comes close to it, he finds it to be nothing. However, he finds God there. Then He will take His account in full and quick is God to take account. Or think as if there is expansive darkness in a deep sea with wave upon wave rising up; clouds overspread from the top. Layers of darkness, one on top of the other. If someone takes out his hand, he is not even able to see it. And he whom God does not give light, for him there is no light. (39-40)

Explanation

اَللّٰهُ نُوْرُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ مَثَلُ نُوْرِهٖ كَمِشْكٰوةٍ فِيْهَا مِصْبَاحٌ ؕ اَلْمِصْبَاحُ فِيْ زُجَاجَةٍ ؕ اَلزُّجَاجَةُ كَاَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُّوْقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُّبٰرَكَةٍ زَيْتُوْنَةٍ لَّا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَّلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ ۙ يَّكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيْٓءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ ؕ نُوْرٌ عَلٰى نُوْرٍ ؕ يَهْدِى اللّٰهُ لِنُوْرِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَيَضْرِبُ اللّٰهُ الْاَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۳۵﴾[41]

These heavens and the earth, in fact the whole universe is a place of darkness for a person who does not believe in God or does believe in Him but does not accept His attributes and the corollaries of these attributes. Such a person can neither know the origin of this universe nor the purpose of its creation. He is not able to decide his own purpose of existence either: does he have absolute powers in this world without any accountability or is he governed and controlled? Is he accountable or unaccountable? What is good and evil for him? Should he adopt the path of oppression or that of justice? Should he merely follow his vested interests and desires or some higher mission in life? A successful and true life is based on the correct answer to these questions. However, he who does not believe in God cannot correctly answer these questions. He roams in the darkness like a blind animal and ultimately one day falls in the pit of destruction and reaches the fate he deserves. However, a person who believes in God with His true attributes is able to solve the riddle of this universe and its fate is also evident to him. All those questions become clear to him as well which can never be answered by someone who does not believe in God. For this reason, this world does not remain a place of darkness for him; in fact, the radiance of faith lights up everything for him and each of its aspects becomes evident to him. Whatever step he takes, he takes in broad daylight and in whichever direction he walks, he is guided by the light of belief in God. It is this reality which is explained in this part of the verse by stating that God is the light of the heavens and the earth. He who has this

41. God only is the light of the heavens and the earth. The example of this light of faith in the heart is as if there is a niche which has a lamp. The lamp is in crystal. The crystal is like a shining star. The lamp is lit up by oil that comes from a lush olive tree which is neither eastern nor western. Its oil is so transparent as if it will light up even without fire touching it. Light upon light. God grants the light of His guidance to whomsoever He wills. And God states these parables to guide people and God is aware of everything.

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light has the light of guidance and is treading the straight path. And he who is deprived of this light is wandering in a world of darkness and no one else can give him light: وَمَن لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ نُوْرًا فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ نُّوْرٍ (and he whom God does not give light, for him there is no light).

Consider the words: اَللّٰهُ نُوْرُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ ؕ مَثَلُ نُوْرِهٖ كَمِشْكٰوةٍ فِيْهَا مِصْبَاحٌ ؕ اَلْمِصْبَاحُ فِيْ زُجَاجَةٍ ؕ اَلزُّجَاجَةُ كَاَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ. They imply that the radiance of faith that enters a heart adds another light to the light of human nature. This illuminates a person's inner-self.

The word مِشْكٰوة refers to the heart of a person that has been likened to a niche where oil-lamps are placed. These lamps are generally placed at high points in a house so that light reaches every nook and corner. Within a person, it is the heart which if lit up, lights up his inner and outer-self. About this lamp it is said that it is enclosed in a crystal. The benefit of this is that the flame of the fire is not affected by gushes of wind and remains stable. This increases its brightness. Exactly the same benefit is drawn by heart that has faith. It is secured from wavering. Whatever the circumstances, it remains content and satisfied. It is such a heart which the Qur'ān (89:27) has referred to as the "contented soul" and this is the greatest treasure a person can acquire because of faith.

It is stated that this crystal is like a shinning star. If the crystal is dirty, it only does not increase the light, it in fact hinders it. Thus the light of faith cleanses the heart from all kinds of filth and makes it shine like a mirror.

The word مُّبٰرَكَةٍ is used in its literal meaning. Just as lush and fertile land is called "blessed" by the Qur'ān, similarly here a tree which bears fruit is called "blessed."

The words لَّا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَّلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ state a characteristic of this tree. This tree is right in the middle of an orchard, neither from its eastern side not western one. It may be kept in mind that trees which are found at the borders of an orchard are always exposed to the intensity of the sun and wind and for this reason do not bear as good a fruit as the one borne by trees that are in the middle. For this reason, this characteristic of the tree is meant to show the utmost lushness of the tree.

This in fact is another quality of the lamp: such is the lucidity of the oil that lights it up that it seems that he would ignite without fire even touching it. This also refers to the fact that faith takes its roots in the chests of those people whose nature is pure and free of any perversion. It sparks up with the weakest of stimuli, and in this way adds the light of faith to the light of a person's nature.

Consider next the expression يَهْدِى اللّٰهُ لِنُوْرِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ. When the verb يَهْدِى occurs with the preposition ل it also encompasses the meaning of "being granted urge" as has been explained under verse 35 of Sūrah Yūnus. This is a reference to the established practice of God regarding providing guidance which has been elucidated in this exegesis at various instances: Only those people are provided this light of faith who preserve the light of their nature and keep it pure. Those who lose this light of nature or spoil it because of their deviations and misdeeds do not receive the light of faith.

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The words لَّا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَّلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ refer to this protection from such deviations. There is also a subtle insinuation found in these words regarding the dispute between the Jews and Christians regarding the East and West of the House of God. It was because of this dispute that they deviated so far away from the real centre that they were deprived of the title of the "middle nation" and were thereby not able to embrace Islam. God provides further urge to accept the truth to only those who duly value the urge they already have. Those who do not do so suffer the consequence of being stripped off the guidance they innately possess. Jesus (sws) is reported to have said: "if a person is a thief in one penny, he is not entrusted with one hundred thousand pennies."

A governing noun is suppressed before لِلنَّاسِ in وَيَضْرِبُ اللّٰهُ الْاَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ. The implied meaning would be that God states these parables to educate and remind people so that people recognize the value of faith through them and are able to light up their hearts through them. Parables are the highest and the most effective means to explain realities. If people do not benefit from them, it is their misfortune.

The words وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ imply that God's intent is always based on His knowledge and wisdom. He is fully aware of the inner and outer selves of every person and thus deals with him in a manner he is worthy of.

فِيْ بُيُوْتٍ اَذِنَ اللّٰهُ اَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيْهَا اسْمُهٗ ۙ يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ فِيْهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْاٰصَالِ ﴿٣٦﴾ رِجَالٌ ۙ لَّا تُلْهِيْهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَّلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَاِقَامِ الصَّلٰوةِ وَاِيْتَآءِ الزَّكٰوةِ ۙ يَخَافُوْنَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيْهِ الْقُلُوْبُ وَالْاَبْصَارُ ﴿٣٧﴾[42]

The words فِيْ بُيُوْتٍ (in houses) are related to مِشْكٰوة (lamp). This locus makes it clear that the niche referrer to earlier is not found in idol-worshipping or liquor-drinking places. This niche is found in places where God is worshipped. Obviously the word lamp refers to an upright heart or in other words to a believer. This heart is not found in every body but only is specific ones and these bodies are not found everywhere but the real place where they can be found are God's mosques. Al-Zamakhsharī has given preference to this view. In his opinion, the sense is: فی بیت من بیوت اذن اللہ ان ترفع[43]

The verb رفع in اَذِنَ اللّٰهُ اَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيْهَا اسْمُهٗ here means to build and construct. A similar usage of this word can be seen verse 147 of Sūrah al-Baqarah thus: وَاِذْ يَرْفَعُ اِبْرٰهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ (and remember when Abraham was building the foundations of the House of God).

The word ذکر encompasses the prayer as well all other forms of God's remembrance including the ones that are adopted to raise high the banner of His religion. The

42. These niches are found in houses about which God has directed that they be built and His name be mentioned in them. In it, those people glorify Him morning and evening whom neither trade nor sale purchase divert from God's remembrance, diligence in the prayer and from paying *zakāh*. They keep fearing the day in which hearts and eyes will be anxious.

43. Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 3, 347.

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expression اَذِنَ اللّٰهُ shows that these houses have been constructed at God's behest so that He is remembered in them. Though the words here are general but their foremost connotations are the worship places that were built as a result of His direct command. For example, the Baytullāh which was built at His behest by Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) or the Bayt al-Maqdis that was built by Solomon (sws) at His directive. After that, other places of worship will also be included which were built as branches of these two. As for those worship places that were built in total violation of God's directive by the idolaters to worship their idols, they will not be included in the connotation of these words. Their status is of abodes of filth. Their niches are not referred to in this parable.

Consider next the portion: رِجَالٌ ۙ لَّا تُلْهِيْهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَّلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَ اِقَامِ الصَّلٰوةِ وَ اِيْتَآءِ الزَّكٰوةِ ۙ يَخَافُوْنَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيْهِ الْقُلُوْبُ وَ الْاَبْصَارُ. The previous verses state a parable of faith. As soon as the discourse reached the mention of mosques, an appropriate occasion arose to refer to the traits of the life led by those who have this faith. This is like stating the effect after stating the cause so that a fact can be personified in real life.

The expression الْغُدُوِّ وَ الْاٰصَالِ has the same meaning as that of "day and night" in our language.

The undefined noun رِجَالٌ is meant for extreme praise of such people. In other words, they are such superb servants of God that nothing of this world can make them negligent of God's remembrance. Their most cherished thing is God's pleasure.

In the expression تِجَارَةٌ وَّلَا بَيْعٌ, the word تِجَارَةٌ refers to general trade and بَيْعٌ conventionally means "to sell." This is a mention of the specific after the general. A businessman never loses the opportunity to sell his goods if the occasion arises; however, such are these servants of God that even such profitable opportunities do not make them forgetful of God's remembrance, let alone trading. Such is the majesty of a believer that he indulges in trade and in sale and purchase but he is never indifferent to God's remembrance and his own obligations.

The prayer and *zakāh* are mentioned as two basic obligations of religion. In reality, they encompass the whole of religion, as has been explained at another instance in this exegesis.

The words تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيْهِ الْقُلُوْبُ وَ الْاَبْصَارُ portray the horrors of the Day of Judgement. On that day, people who spent their lives in negligence will continue to remain anxious and dismayed.

لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوْا وَ يَزِيْدَهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿۳۸﴾[44]

The ل is not of causation but of consequence. An example of this usage can be seen

44. So that God gives them the best reward of their deeds and gives them more out of His grace. And God will give immeasurably to whomsoever He desires..

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in verse 8 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ thus: فَالْتَقَطَهٗٓ اٰلُ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُوْنَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَّ حَزَنًا.[45] A famous couplet of Imru' al-Qays reads:

وما ذرفت عيناك إلا لتضربي

بسهميك في أعشار قلب مقتل[46]

Here too the on is meant to express the consequence.

The verse means that whatever they are doing in this world for fear of the Hereafter and to earn the pleasure of God will be a source of a reward that surpasses their deeds and God will further bless them from His grace: such people are forgiven in a way that they cannot even imagine.

وَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَعْمَالُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍۭ بِقِيْعَةٍ يَّحْسَبُهُ الظَّمْاٰنُ مَآءً ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءَهٗ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْـًٔا وَّ وَجَدَ اللّٰهَ عِنْدَهٗ فَوَفّٰىهُ حِسَابَهٗ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿۳۹﴾[47]

After mentioning the parable of belief and its bearers, now a parable of disbelief and the inner and outer selves of disbelievers is being mentioned: the extent of light there is exactly the same as the extent of darkness here. In the parable of the believers, first the effect-producer (faith) is highlighted and then the effectee (deed). In the parable of the disbelievers it is the opposite. The reason for this is that faith is a very deep reality whose roots have penetrated deep into the nature of a human being. It is the blessed consequences of faith which become apparent in deeds and conducts. On the other hand, disbelief is like a tree that has sprouted on filth and garbage whose poisonous fruits are before the eyes in the form of deeds and conduct but does not have any roots in human nature that need to be highlighted.

The implication is that no different will be the fate of the disbelievers than the one what this verse depicts. It will become evident to them that their deeds too have vanished in thin air; however, instead of their deeds, they will encounter their Lord and He will settle their account in the blink of an eye.

The words حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءَهٗ until the end of the verse portray a picture of this misfortune and deprivation that these disbelievers will face in the Hereafter. In other words, the complete sense will be to the effect: حتى اذا جاء الكافر أعماله يوم القيامة. Since the purpose of the parable is to explain their deprivation in the Hereafter, the direction of the

45. So the Pharaoh's household picked him up that he may become their enemy and a source of grief.

46. Imru' al-Qays, *Dīwān*, 3.

47. And those who disbelieved, the parable of their deeds is as if there is a mirage in a desolate desert which the thirsty regards to be water until when he comes close to it, he finds it to be nothing. However, he finds God there. Then He will take His account in full and quick is God to take account.

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discourse automatically shifts towards it and that is why the accusative pronoun gives due deference to what deeds are compared to: mirage.

It may be noted that the word كُفَّارٌ or the expression الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا has never been used in the Qur'ān to refer to those who disbelieve in God. None of the addressees of the Qur'ān disbelieved in God; all of them associated partners with Him. These idolaters are called sometimes as disbelievers and sometimes as polytheists. This is because polytheism is in fact disbelief. In religion, it is not required to merely believe in God but to believe in Him with all His attributes as well as all requisites of these attributes. A person who does not believe in God with all His attributes and their requisites will find all his deeds carrying no weight in the Hereafter even though he may have done them thinking that he is doing a virtue.

The last part of the verse وَاللّٰهُ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ clarifies the misconception that often afflicts the naive. They think that the hereafter and its accountability is a very far off reality, if ever it is; there is no need to be worried about it at the moment. They would also contend that who can keep the complete record of the deeds and words of such a large number of people. These words of the verse imply that those who spent all their lives with such baseless notions being negligent of the next world will see that the account of their deeds has come before them in the blink of an eye.

اَوْ كَظُلُمٰتٍ فِيْ بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍّ يَّغْشٰهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهٖ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهٖ سَحَابٌ ؕ ظُلُمٰتٌۢ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ ؕ اِذَاۤ اَخْرَجَ يَدَهٗ لَمْ يَكَدْ يَرٰىهَا ؕ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ نُوْرًا فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ نُّوْرٍ ﴿۴۰﴾[48]

The expression بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍ means "deep sea." The word لُجٌّ refers to that part of the sea where the water is the deepest. Thus لُّجِّيٍ is its associated noun.

The previous verse described a parable of the deeds of the disbelievers. This verse mentions a parable of their mental darkness. Either because of not believing in God or not believing in Him in the proper way they lead their lives in pitch darkness.

Light can only be procured through faith in God. A person who is not given the urge by God to accept faith – because of his own wretchedness – will never be able to obtain light. Unless he treads the path of faith, he will keep wandering in darkness and each day this darkness will continue to increase.

Section VI: Verses (35-40)

Once the essence of belief and disbelief has been explained, the succeeding verses

48. Or think as if there is expansive darkness in a deep sea with wave upon wave rising up; clouds overspread from the top. Layers of darkness, one on top of the other. If someone takes out his hand, he is not even able to see it. And he whom God does not give light, for him there is no light.

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invite the addressees to profess belief in God. First attention is directed at those attributes and majesties of God which testify that only God is controlling this universe. No one else has any share in this. For this reason, everyone should consign themselves to Him only. After that, the hypocrites are specifically warned that now their policy of divided affiliation cannot continue. They should either devotedly show obedience only to God and His Prophet or remember that God will grant dominance to His sincere servants in this land and all their open or hidden enemies will be humiliated.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ مَنۡ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ وَ الطَّيۡرُ صٰٓفّٰتٍ ؕ كُلٌّ قَدۡ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهٗ وَ تَسۡبِيۡحَهٗ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ
عَلِيۡمٌۢ بِمَا يَفۡعَلُوۡنَ ﴿۴۱﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مُلۡكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ ۚ وَ اِلَى اللّٰهِ الۡمَصِيۡرُ ﴿۴۲﴾ اَلَمۡ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُزۡجِىۡ سَحَابًا ثُمَّ
يُؤَلِّفُ بَيۡنَهٗ ثُمَّ يَجۡعَلُهٗ رُكَامًا فَتَرَى الۡوَدۡقَ يَخۡرُجُ مِنۡ خِلٰلِهٖ ۚ وَ يُنَزِّلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مِنۡ جِبَالٍ فِيۡهَا مِنۡۢ بَرَدٍ
فَيُصِيۡبُ بِهٖ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ وَ يَصۡرِفُهٗ عَنۡ مَّنۡ يَّشَآءُ ؕ يَكَادُ سَنَا بَرۡقِهٖ يَذۡهَبُ بِالۡاَبۡصَارِ ﴿۴۳﴾ يُقَلِّبُ اللّٰهُ الَّيۡلَ وَ
النَّهَارَ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَعِبۡرَةً لِّاُولِى الۡاَبۡصَارِ ﴿۴۴﴾ وَاللّٰهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ دَآبَّةٍ مِّنۡ مَّآءٍ ۚ فَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّمۡشِىۡ عَلٰى بَطۡنِهٖ ۚ وَ
مِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّمۡشِىۡ عَلٰى رِجۡلَيۡنِ ۚ وَ مِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّمۡشِىۡ عَلٰٓى اَرۡبَعٍ ؕ يَخۡلُقُ اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ
قَدِيۡرٌ ﴿۴۵﴾ لَقَدۡ اَنۡزَلۡنَآ اٰيٰتٍ مُّبَيِّنٰتٍ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَهۡدِىۡ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسۡتَقِيۡمٍ ﴿۴۶﴾ وَيَقُوۡلُوۡنَ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَ
بِالرَّسُوۡلِ وَ اَطَعۡنَا ثُمَّ يَتَوَلّٰى فَرِيۡقٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِ ذٰلِكَ ؕ وَ مَاۤ اُولٰٓئِكَ بِالۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿۴۷﴾ وَ اِذَا دُعُوۡۤا اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَ
رَسُوۡلِهٖ لِيَحۡكُمَ بَيۡنَهُمۡ اِذَا فَرِيۡقٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ مُّعۡرِضُوۡنَ ﴿۴۸﴾ وَ اِنۡ يَّكُنۡ لَّهُمُ الۡحَقُّ يَاۡتُوۡۤا اِلَيۡهِ مُذۡعِنِيۡنَ ﴿۴۹﴾ اَفِىۡ
قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ مَّرَضٌ اَمِ ارۡتَابُوۡۤا اَمۡ يَخَافُوۡنَ اَنۡ يَّحِيۡفَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَ رَسُوۡلُهٗ ؕ بَلۡ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوۡنَ ﴿۵۰﴾ اِنَّمَا كَانَ
قَوۡلَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ اِذَا دُعُوۡۤا اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ لِيَحۡكُمَ بَيۡنَهُمۡ اَنۡ يَّقُوۡلُوۡا سَمِعۡنَا وَ اَطَعۡنَا ؕ وَ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الۡمُفۡلِحُوۡنَ ﴿۵۱﴾
وَ مَنۡ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوۡلَهٗ وَ يَخۡشَ اللّٰهَ وَ يَتَّقۡهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الۡفَآئِزُوۡنَ ﴿۵۲﴾ وَ اَقۡسَمُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ جَهۡدَ اَيۡمَانِهِمۡ لَئِنۡ
اَمَرۡتَهُمۡ لَيَخۡرُجُنَّ ؕ قُلۡ لَّا تُقۡسِمُوۡا ۚ طَاعَةٌ مَّعۡرُوۡفَةٌ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيۡرٌۢ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۵۳﴾ قُلۡ اَطِيۡعُوا اللّٰهَ وَ اَطِيۡعُوا
الرَّسُوۡلَ ۚ فَاِنۡ تَوَلَّوۡا فَاِنَّمَا عَلَيۡهِ مَا حُمِّلَ وَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ مَّا حُمِّلۡتُمۡ ؕ وَ اِنۡ تُطِيۡعُوۡهُ تَهۡتَدُوۡا ؕ وَ مَا عَلَى الرَّسُوۡلِ اِلَّا

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الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ
الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۪ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِيْنَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضٰى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ اَمْنًا ؕ يَعْبُدُوْنَنِيْ لَا
يُشْرِكُوْنَ بِيْ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَطِيْعُوا
الرَّسُوْلَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مُعْجِزِيْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۚ وَمَاْوٰىهُمُ النَّارُ ؕ وَلَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٥٧﴾

Do you not see that whatever is in the heavens and the earth glorify God alone and the birds too with outstretched wings? Each knows its prayer and glorification and God knows whatever they are doing. And for God alone is the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and to God alone is everyone's return. (41-42)

Do you not see that God brings forth the clouds, then joins them together; after that arranges them into layers? Then you see that from within them rain emerges and He unleashes from the sky – from the mountains in it – hail. Thus He sends them down on whomsoever He likes and turns them away from whomsoever He wants. Such is the flash of their lightning as if it will snatch away the eyes. It is God alone Who causes the alternation of day and night. Indeed, there is a great lesson in it for those who have insight. (43-44)

And it is God Who created every living being from water. So some of them creep on their bellies; and some of them walk on two feet and some on four feet. God creates whatever He intends. Indeed, God has power over all things. (45)

We have sent down revelations which clearly explain and it is God Who guides whomsoever He wills to the straight path. (46)

And they claim: "We have professed faith in God and in the Messenger and We are obedient." Then one group from among them turns away and these people are not believers in reality. And when they are called to God and His Messenger so that the Messenger may decide among them, one of their groups turns away. And if they come to obtain the truth in their favour, they come to him very obediently. Is there an ailment in their hearts or are they still inflicted with doubt or do they fear that God and His Messenger will be unjust to them? In fact, these people are themselves unjust. Such are the words of the believers that when they are called to God and His Messenger to resolve a mutual disagreement, they say: "We listened and we obeyed." And, in reality, it is these people who shall prosper. And those who obey God and His messenger and those fear Him and abide by His limits, it is they who shall be successful. (47-52)

And they swore strong oaths that if you direct them to wage *jihād*, they will certainly march out. Say: Do not swear oaths. Obedience in the conventional way is the real thing. God well knows what you are doing. Tell them: Obey God and obey the Messenger. However, if you turn away, then remember that the responsibility on the Messenger is only that which has been imposed on him and on you what has been

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imposed on you. And if you obey him alone, you will be guided and the responsibility of the Messenger is only to clearly communicate. (53-54)

God's promise with those among you who have professed faith and done righteous deeds is that He shall grant them authority in this land the way He had granted it to those before them and He shall establish this religion that He has chosen for them and after this state of their fear, He shall transform it into peace. They shall worship Me and associate none with Me. And those who disbelieve after this, then, in reality, it is they who are the disobedient. (55)

And be diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh* and remain obedient to the Messenger so that mercy is shown to you. And do not think about these disbelievers that they will be beyond Our control in this land. And their abode is Hell and, indeed, it is a very evil abode. (56-57)

Explanation

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ مَنۡ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ وَالطَّيۡرُ صٰٓفّٰتٍ ؕ كُلٌّ قَدۡ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهٗ وَتَسۡبِيۡحَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيۡمٌۢ بِمَا يَفۡعَلُوۡنَ ﴿۴۱﴾[49]

Exactly the same subject as the one raised in this verse has been discussed in verse 18 of Sūrah al-Ḥajj. It has been fully explained there. Every object of this universe glorifies God. Just as its apparent form – the way we observe it – testifies that it is obedient to God and follows His directives, its inner form is also busy in glorifying and exalting Him. Human beings not being fully aware of their language and gestures though are not able to understand their glorification and prayers. This is also pointed out in verse 44 of Sūrah Isrā' thus: لَا تَفۡقَهُوۡنَ تَسۡبِيۡحَهُمۡ. All these objects and entities through their practical demonstration invite human beings that they too join them in glorifying and exalting God, and like them worship God only. If a person adopts some other way, he adopts something entirely different from the rest of the world and strikes a mantra that is in complete discord with the mantra of everyone else. Also found in this verse is encouragement for those who adopt the way of God: they should not regard themselves to be alone or in minority. The person who treads this path is never alone. This path is replete with caravans. Every entity of this universe is his fellow-passenger. Why should he get dismayed if a few ingrates tread a different path? Why should he lose hope and be frustrated when the heavens and earth of God, His sun and moon, His oceans and mountains, animals and birds all are in harmony with him?

Next, from among things found between the heavens and the earth, birds are referred to by the words: وَالطَّيۡرُ صٰٓفّٰتٍ: they also glorify God while flying with outstretched wings. At some other instances, their chanting and singing is referred to. Here their outstretched wings portray their prostration before God.

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49. Do you not see that whatever is in the heavens and the earth glorify God alone and the birds too with outstretched wings? Each knows its prayer and glorification and God knows whatever they are doing.

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The words كُلٌّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهٗ وَتَسْبِيْحَهٗ refer to the fact that people must not think that God has prescribed the same way for everyone to pray to Him and glorify Him. In fact, He has appointed different ways for everyone to do so, and everything has fully learnt these ways and is following them accordingly.

The words وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ imply that if people are not aware of how birds glorify and pray to God, it does not matter. God is aware of all they do, and it is God Who is informing them about this so that they seek a lesson from it.

وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۴۲﴾[50]

This verse mentions the reason for everyone's glorification and exaltation of God and why they should do it. None except God is the sovereign of this universe and none except to Him will everyone return. So, when this is so in both worlds, on what grounds should others be glorified and exalted.

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُزْجِيْ سَحَابًا ثُمَّ يُؤَلِّفُ بَيْنَهٗ ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهٗ رُكَامًا فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلٰلِهٖ ۚ وَيُنَزِّلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مِنْ جِبَالٍ فِيْهَا مِنْۢ بَرَدٍ فَيُصِيْبُ بِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَصْرِفُهٗ عَنْ مَّنْ يَّشَآءُ ۭ يَكَادُ سَنَا بَرْقِهٖ يَذْهَبُ بِالْاَبْصَارِ ﴿۴۳﴾[51]

Mentioned in these verses is a proof of God's sovereignty and control of this universe. It is only He Who has absolute authority in it and none can interfere in His work which is solely based on His wisdom. The same element of nature can prove to be a boon for some and a bane for some. He decides this. Whoever He wants, He keeps intact and whoever He wants, He saves from calamities. No one can dare save himself or others if God intends to inflict him with any trial.

It may be kept in mind that in one verse, God has explained how He alone is responsible for showing favour or sending affliction to people. The first part exemplifies His mercy and the second (beginning wit the words: He unleashes from the sky) His affliction. This refers to the winter clouds which appear with tempestuous winds, intense lightning and hail and such is the hailstorm they unleash that cities after cities are enveloped with hail. It is as if mountains of hail are concealed in the clouds and go on a rampage of destruction. Some nations – among those mentioned by the Qur'ān that were routed by God's punishment – were destroyed in this way. Their mention can be seen at relevant places.

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50. And for God alone is the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and to God alone is everyone's return.

51. Do you not see that God brings forth the clouds, then joins them together; after that arranges them into layers? Then you see that from within them rain emerges and He unleashes from the sky – from the mountains in it – hail. Thus He sends them down on whomsoever He likes and turns them away from whomsoever He wants. Such is the flash of their lightning as if it will snatch away the eyes.

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يُقَلِّبُ اللّٰهُ الَّيۡلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَعِبۡرَةً لِّاُولِى الۡاَبۡصَارِ ﴿۴۴﴾[52]

Similarly, bringing forth the day after the night and the night after the day is solely in God's control. None has the power to make the night appear during the day and the day during the night. Neither can anyone delay their coming or going by the fraction of a second.

It has been explained at another instance that the word عِبۡرَة means to reach one reality through another one. In other words, people of insight are able to see the intrinsic through the extrinsic as well as principles concealed in components. After these observations, they have not the slightest doubt that this universe has been created by a wise and powerful God Who has sole authority in it. For this reason, only He deserves to be worshipped and shown obedience to. It may be kept in mind that it is this عِبۡرَة which is the real substance of a human being. If someone is devoid of it, he is not a human being and is in fact an animal. The eye which is not able to detect the inner form of a thing by viewing its outer one is blind.

وَاللّٰهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ دَآبَّةٍ مِّنۡ مَّآءٍ ۚ فَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّمۡشِىۡ عَلٰى بَطۡنِهٖ ۚ وَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّمۡشِىۡ عَلٰى رِجۡلَيۡنِ ۚ وَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّمۡشِىۡ عَلٰٓى اَرۡبَعٍ ؕ يَخۡلُقُ اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ ﴿۴۵﴾[53]

The implication of this verse is that if there are variations in entities, forms and objects, this does not mean that this universe is governed by different intentions, as is contented by the naïve idolaters. This in fact is a proof of the power and wisdom of its creator. He created all living beings from the same water. Who can say that the creator of two-legged animals is different and of four-legged ones different. All have been created by the same creator. He creates whatever He wants to from His power in whatever form and shape He intends. Since He has power over all, everyone should consign himself to Him and worship Him alone.

لَقَدۡ اَنۡزَلۡنَآ اٰيٰتٍ مُّبَيِّنٰتٍ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَهۡدِىۡ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسۡتَقِيۡمٍ ﴿۴۶﴾[54]

This is a warning similar to the one sounded in verse 24 earlier. It is the established practice of God that He guides only those – with His revelations which lead to the straight path – who want to tread this path. As for the ingrates, they will continue to

52. It is God alone Who causes the alternation of day and night. Indeed, there is a great lesson in it for those who have insight.

53. And it is God Who created every living being from water. So some of them creep on their bellies; and some of them walk on two feet and some on four feet. God creates whatever He intends. Indeed, God has power over all things.

54. We have sent down revelations which clearly explain and it is God Who guides whomsoever He wills to the straight path.

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wander in the darkness of their base desires until they encounter their fate. It has been explained at various instances of this exegesis that God's will is based on wisdom and at the same time is absolute: none can change it.

وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَبِالرَّسُوْلِ وَاَطَعْنَا ثُمَّ يَتَوَلّٰى فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ ۭ وَمَآ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۴۷﴾[55]

After a general invitation had been given to the addressees to consign themselves to God, the case of the hypocrites is taken up. Their pranks and mischief had increased a lot, as is evident from the incident of *ifk*.

The last part of the verse "and these people are not believers in reality" means that these claimants of faith are not believers in the sight of God. It is not just by laying claim to faith by the tongue that this obligation is fulfilled; in fact, together with it, an essential requirement is to obey the directives of God and His messenger without any reluctance and hesitation. If a person does not fulfil this requirement, his claim to faith is totally false and he is a die-hard hypocrite.

وَاِذَا دُعُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ اِذَا فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿۴۸﴾[56]

This verse mentions the proof of their hypocrisy and lack of faith: when some dispute arises among them and they are invited to present it before God and His prophet so that the latter can decide between them according to God's law, each of their groups continues to show evasion. Inviting people to God here obviously means inviting them to the law of God of which the messenger is a representative. His verdict is the verdict of God. If a person lays claim to profess belief in God and His messenger but turns to decide his disputes and evades the court of the messenger, then he is a hypocrite.

Here it should be kept in mind that initially when in the suburbs of Madīnah as long as the Jews had influence in their circles, the hypocrites would go to their courts to settle their cases. One of the reasons for this was that the Jews had totally altered the *sharī'ah* of God to their own liking and desires. Secondly, they could be very easily bribed to win a favourable decision. The hypocrites would use this situation to their advantage: if they had a hope to obtain a favourable decision from the Prophet (sws), they would very obediently take their dispute to his court and if this was not the case, they would go to the courts of the Jews.

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55. And they claim: "We have professed faith in God and in the Messenger and We are obedient." Then one group from among them turns away and these people are not believers in reality.

56. And when they are called to God and His Messenger so that the Messenger may decide among them, one of their groups turns away.

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وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ لَّهُمُ الْحَقُّ يَاْتُوْٓا اِلَيْهِ مُذْعِنِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾[57]

In other words, if they knew that they would not get a favourable decision from the Prophet (sws), they would go to the courts of the Jews. The Qur'ān (4:63) has called this attitude of theirs as *taḥākum ilā al-ṭāghūṭ* (seeking verdict from Satan) and regarded it as a polytheistic practice, as has been explained at an appropriate instance.

اَفِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ اَمِ ارْتَابُوْٓا اَمْ يَخَافُوْنَ اَنْ يَّحِيْفَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ ۭ بَلْ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾[58]

The word ailment is used in the Qur'an to refer to both "jealousy" and "hypocrisy." Concomitant indications show that here it refers to the latter. Calling both these as ailments is something very evident.

The word إرتياب means to be inflicted with doubt. This doubt can relate both to the messengerhood of Muḥammad (sws) as well as to the future of Islam. One of the major reasons of the hesitancy of the hypocrites was that feared that there was a chance that both the Muslims and their opponents would ultimately be triumphant. So they thought it to their advantage that a little link should remain with each of these groups.

The word حيف means "oppression and injustice." The verse states that the attitude of reluctance and indecision shown by these hypocrites is because of the three enumerated reasons: either their hearts are inflicted with the ailment of hypocrisy or they are in doubt about the future of Islam and the Prophet (sws) or they have fear that their cases will be decided unjustly by him their cases are brought to him. They should decide that which of these three ailments afflicts them or is it that they are afflicted by all the three. Whatever the case, it is against faith.

The last part of the verse "in fact, these people are themselves unjust," alludes to the fact that they fear injustice from God and His Prophet whereas by adopting this attitude they themselves are being unjust to themselves. They think that they are safeguarding their future interests whereas they have actually taken refuge in the shadow of a wall that is about to be demolished.

اِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذَا دُعُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ اَنْ يَّقُوْلُوْا سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا ۭ وَاُولٰۗىِٕكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾[59]

The verse depicts the character of true believers. People who consign themselves to God disregarding their desires and wants, it is they who have in fact safeguarded their interests in this world and in the next and not those who want to simultaneously

57. And if they come to obtain the truth in their favour, they come to him very obediently.

58. Is there an ailment in their hearts or are they still inflicted with doubt or do they fear that God and His Messenger will be unjust to them? In fact, these people are themselves unjust.

59. Such are the words of the believers that when they are called to God and His Messenger to resolve a mutual disagreement, they say: "We listened and we obeyed." And, in reality, it is these people who shall prosper.

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befriend adherents of belief and disbelief. People who board two boats are destined to drown.

وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَيَخْشَ اللّٰهَ وَيَتَّقْهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُوْنَ ﴿۵۲﴾[60]

Form reduction in يَتَّقْهِ has changed its shape, but such form reductions are common.

The words خشية and تقوى are mentioned here adjacent to one another. In my opinion, the former is a depiction of the state of the heart and the latter refers to abiding by the limits of God. In other words, one refers to the inner-self of a person and the other to his outer-self.

The verse implies that real successful people are those who obey God and His Messenger in both conducive and in adverse circumstances while disregarding their personal needs and interests. They are ones whose hearts are replete with the fear of God and abide by His bounds in their everyday lives. It is evident from this that in the first place a mere claim to faith is not sufficient for success and salvation; obedience to God and His Messenger is also essential for this. Secondly, even obedience is not sufficient; it is essential that a person must have God's fear in his heart and practical life.

Thus it is these people who will remain successful. As for the mean and selfish who want to remain with God and His Messenger merely to protect their personal interests, they in fact have nothing to do with them.

وَاَقْسَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ جَهْدَ اَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ اَمَرْتَهُمْ لَيَخْرُجُنَّ ؕ قُلْ لَّا تُقْسِمُوْا ۚ طَاعَةٌ مَّعْرُوْفَةٌ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۵۳﴾[61]

In spite of pledging the covenant of complete obedience, just as these hypocrites tried to evade the courts of God's Messenger, they also tried to evade *jihād*. They would vehemently brag that they were ready for this cause with their wealth and persons. However, when the time came, they would dodge away. The Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them to not swear oaths in such abundance; oaths are no substitute for deeds. The real thing that is needed from them is obedience to God and His Messenger according to the norms. How long can they hide their character with these hollow oaths if they actually lack submission and compliance?

They can deceive others with these false oaths but how can they deceive the God Who knows everything and is fully aware of all the words and deeds of everyone.

Previous *sūrahs* mention this trait of swearing profusely of the hypocrites as will the succeeding ones too. This proclivity has a psychological reason: they do not have noble traits to prove their character; in order to do so, they use their oaths; they have

60. And those who obey God and His messenger and those fear Him and abide by His limits, it is they who shall be successful.

61. And they swore strong oaths that if you direct them to wage *jihād*, they will certainly march out. Say: Do not swear oaths. Obedience in the conventional way is the real thing. God well knows what you are doing.

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this guilt in them that unless they swear an oath, their addressees would not believe them. People who are decent and dignified have confidence in their character and therefore do not have any need to swear oaths.

The sentence طَاعَةٌ مَّعْرُوْفَةٌ is of similar nature to فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيْلٌ (12:18). Grammatically, there can be two possibilities: these words form an inchoative (*mubtadā'*) of a suppressed enunciative (*khabar*); this is because an undefined noun that is qualified by an adjective has the ability to become an inchoative. Similarly, they can also be the enunciative of a suppressed inchoative. In both cases, the meaning will almost be the same. This is because the reason to suppress something is to direct full attention to what is expressed, and this is found in both cases.

قُلْ اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ ۚ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حُمِّلَ وَعَلَيْكُمْ مَّا حُمِّلْتُمْ ؕ وَاِنْ تُطِيْعُوْهُ تَهْتَدُوْا ؕ وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُوْلِ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿۵۴﴾[62]

These words admonish the hypocrites. The Prophet (sws) has fulfilled his responsibility of delivering God's religion to them with clarity. He is not required to make them accept it; accepting it is in fact their responsibility; for this they will be answerable before God.

The words "And if you obey him alone, you will be guided" sound warning as well as assurance. If they obey the Prophet (sws), they will succeed; otherwise, they should remember that they themselves will be responsible of calling for their doom.

The words "the responsibility of the Messenger is only to clearly communicate" show the exact obligation of God's Messenger. If even after this, these people do not fulfil their responsibility, they themselves will suffer its consequences.

In these verses, it can be seen that it is repeatedly said that the essential consequence of faith is showing obedience to God and His Messenger, and the way to show obedience to God is to be obedient to the Messenger. Without this compliance, had a mere claim to faith by the tongue been sufficient, these hypocrites were not behind anyone. They would not only express faith like this, they would also pledge obedience by the tongue and to prove their verbal claim would swear strong oaths. This is the very reason that at another instance the Qur'ān (4:145) has stated that they will be in the lowest section of Hell.

وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۪ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ

62. Tell them: Obey God and obey the Messenger. However, if you turn away, then remember that the responsibility on the Messenger is only that which has been imposed on him and on you what has been imposed on you. And if you obey him alone, you will be guided and the responsibility of the Messenger is only to clearly communicate.

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دِيْنَهُمُ الَّذِى ارْتَضٰى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ اَمْنًا ؕ يَعْبُدُوْنَنِىْ لَا يُشْرِكُوْنَ بِىْ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿۵۵﴾[63]

This verse addresses the doubt harboured by the hypocrites regarding the future of Islam.

The promise referred to in it has been mentioned in detail in Sūrahs al-Anbiyā', al-Ḥajj, and al-Mu'minūn.

The words "the way He had granted it to those before them" refer to the earlier messengers and their nations. The established practice of God regarding His Messengers has been repeatedly pointed out in this exegesis that they and their followers are bound to triumph and achieve domination in this world. Once these Messengers conclusively deliver the truth, those who deny them are necessarily destroyed and the reins of leadership are entrusted to those who believe in the Messenger.

The words "He shall establish this religion that He has chosen for them" refer to the religion of Islam and are similar to what is said in verse 6 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah: رَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الإِسْلاَمَ دِيْناً (I chose for you Islam as the religion). Establishing religion in this land means that the law of this religion will be upheld here and it is on its foundation that the collective and political system will be based.

The words "after this state of their fear, He shall transform it into peace" are very meaningful: the clouds of uncertainty and doubt that loomed large at those times will be temporary. God will soon make the place secure and peaceful and no would did dare pose a threat to God's religion and its bearers in the length and breadth of the country.

The way this promise of God was fulfilled after the conquest of Makkah is a historical fact that none can deny. Ultimately, regarding the whole Arabia peninsula, the Prophet (sws) said: لايجتمع فيها دينان (two religions will never simultaneously exist here).[64]

The words "and those who disbelieve after this, then, in reality, it is they who are the disobedient" refer to the fact that at the moment those who are opposing God's religion are being given respite because they are passing through the period of test and trial ordained for them. However, soon the verdict will delivered against those who were being disobedient to God and His Messenger and they will meet a humiliating fate. The purpose of the last part of the sentence is to refer to its consequence.

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63. God's promise with those among you who have professed faith and done righteous deeds is that He shall grant them authority in this land the way He had granted it to those before them and He shall establish this religion that He has chosen for them and after this state of their fear, He shall transform it into peace. They shall worship Me and associate none with Me. And those who disbelieve after this, then, in reality, it is they who are the disobedient.

64. Abū 'Abdullāh Mālik ibn Anas, *Mu'aṭṭā'*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dār iḥyā' al-turāth al-'arabi, n.d.), 892, (no. 1584).

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وَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾[65]

The verse states the cure for the ailments of hypocrisy, fear and doubt. If they adopt these measures, they will be successful both in this world and the next.

لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مُعْجِزِيْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ ۚ وَمَاْوٰىهُمُ النَّارُ ۭ وَلَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٥٧﴾[66]

The hypocrites were over-awed by the fear of Islam's enemies, particularly the Quraysh. This verse dispels this fear.

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Section VII: Verses (58-64)

Coming up are the concluding verses of the *sūrah*. Certain questions and doubts that arose in the minds of people regarding the *ḥijāb* or dress-code verses (27-31) earlier are explained. Since these verses were revealed after the primary directives, they were placed at the end of the *sūrah* and it is also specified that they have been revealed as an explanation.

At the end, there are three verses which relate to the hypocrites who were mentioned in verses 47-57. It is evident from concomitant indications that these verses were also revealed as a further rebuke to them. For this reason they are placed at the end.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لِيَسْتَاْذِنْكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ وَالَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يَبْلُغُوا الْحُلُمَ مِنْكُمْ ثَلٰثَ مَرّٰتٍ ۭ مِنْ قَبْلِ صَلٰوةِ الْفَجْرِ وَحِيْنَ تَضَعُوْنَ ثِيَابَكُمْ مِّنَ الظَّهِيْرَةِ وَمِنْۢ بَعْدِ صَلٰوةِ الْعِشَاۗءِ ۭ ثَلٰثُ عَوْرٰتٍ لَّكُمْ ۭ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا عَلَيْهِمْ جُنَاحٌۢ بَعْدَهُنَّ ۭ طَوّٰفُوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ عَلٰي بَعْضٍ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَاِذَا بَلَغَ الْاَطْفَالُ مِنْكُمُ الْحُلُمَ فَلْيَسْتَاْذِنُوْا كَمَا اسْتَاْذَنَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَالْقَوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَاۗءِ الّٰتِيْ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ نِكَاحًا فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِنَّ جُنَاحٌ اَنْ يَّضَعْنَ ثِيَابَهُنَّ غَيْرَ

65. And be diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh* and remain obedient to the Messenger so that mercy is shown to you.

66. And do not think about these disbelievers that they will be beyond Our control in this land. And their abode is Hell and, indeed, it is a very evil abode.

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مُتَبَرِّجٰتٍۭ بِزِيْنَةٍ ؕ وَاَنْ يَّسْتَعْفِفْنَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُنَّ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٦٠﴾ لَيْسَ عَلَى الْاَعْمٰى حَرَجٌ وَّلَا عَلَى الْاَعْرَجِ
حَرَجٌ وَّلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيْضِ حَرَجٌ وَّلَا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَنْ تَاْكُلُوْا مِنْۢ بُيُوْتِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ اٰبَآئِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ
اِخْوَانِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ اَخَوٰتِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ اَعْمَامِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ عَمّٰتِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ اَخْوَالِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ خٰلٰتِكُمْ اَوْ مَا مَلَكْتُمْ
مَّفَاتِحَهٗٓ اَوْ صَدِيْقِكُمْ ؕ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ اَنْ تَاْكُلُوْا جَمِيْعًا اَوْ اَشْتَاتًا ؕ فَاِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ بُيُوْتًا فَسَلِّمُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِكُمْ
تَحِيَّةً مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ مُبٰرَكَةً طَيِّبَةً ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ اِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا
بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَاِذَا كَانُوْا مَعَهٗ عَلٰٓى اَمْرٍ جَامِعٍ لَّمْ يَذْهَبُوْا حَتّٰى يَسْتَاْذِنُوْهُ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَاْذِنُوْنَكَ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ
يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ۚ فَاِذَا اسْتَاْذَنُوْكَ لِبَعْضِ شَاْنِهِمْ فَاْذَنْ لِّمَنْ شِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمُ اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ
رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٦٢﴾ لَا تَجْعَلُوْا دُعَآءَ الرَّسُوْلِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَآءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا ؕ قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ يَتَسَلَّلُوْنَ مِنْكُمْ لِوَاذًا ۚ
فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِيْنَ يُخَالِفُوْنَ عَنْ اَمْرِهٖٓ اَنْ تُصِيْبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ اَوْ يُصِيْبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾ اَلَآ اِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ
الْاَرْضِ ؕ قَدْ يَعْلَمُ مَآ اَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ ؕ وَيَوْمَ يُرْجَعُوْنَ اِلَيْهِ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوْا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٦٤﴾

Believers! Let your slave men and women and those who have yet to reach maturity ask permission on three occasions: first, before the *fajr* prayer; second, in the afternoon when you take off your garments and after the *'ishā* prayer. These three occasions are times of your privacy. At other times, it shall be no offence for you or them to come without permission because you do go around meeting one another. In this way, God explains His revelations to you and God is All-Knowing and All-Wise. And when the children among you reach maturity, let them also ask your permission as those before them would do. In this manner, God explains His revelations to you and God is All-Knowing and All-Wise. And there is no harm if aged women who have no hope of marriage discard their shawls if they do not have any intention to display embellishments. And if they too exercise caution, it is better for them. And God hears all and knows all. (58-60)

There is neither any restriction on the blind, on the lame, on the sick nor on your own selves whether you eat from your houses or your fathers' or grandfathers' or your mothers' or your brothers' or your sisters' or your paternal uncles' or your paternal aunts' or your maternal uncles' or your maternal aunts' or from those who are dependent on you or from your friends', whether you eat together or separately. However, when you enter houses, say *salām* to your people which is a blessed and

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noble invocation prescribed by God. God thus explains to you His revelations so that you may understand. (61)

Only they are believers who have strong faith in God and His Messenger. And when they are with the Messenger for some collective task, they do not go away from there unless they seek permission from him. Those who go after seeking permission from you, only they are the ones who have faith in God and His Messenger. So, when they seek permission from you for some need they have, you can give permission to whomsoever you like and pray to God for their forgiveness. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (62)

Do not regard the way you address the messenger to be similar to how you address one another. God fully knows those among you who have been secretly slipping away while hiding behind others. So, those people who evading the Messenger's directive have been opposing him should fear that a trial may afflict them or a painful punishment visit them. Listen! Whatever is in the heavens and the earth, all belongs to God alone. God is well aware of every situation that you may be in. And the day they are returned to Him, He shall tell them whatever they would have done. And God is fully aware of everything. (63-64)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لِيَسْتَاْذِنْكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ وَالَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يَبْلُغُوا الْحُلُمَ مِنْكُمْ ثَلٰثَ مَرّٰتٍ ؕ مِنْ قَبْلِ صَلٰوةِ الْفَجْرِ وَحِيْنَ تَضَعُوْنَ ثِيَابَكُمْ مِّنَ الظَّهِيْرَةِ وَمِنْۢ بَعْدِ صَلٰوةِ الْعِشَآءِ ؕ ثَلٰثُ عَوْرٰتٍ لَّكُمْ ؕ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا عَلَيْهِمْ جُنَاحٌۢ بَعْدَهُنَّ ؕ طَوّٰفُوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۵۸﴾ وَاِذَا بَلَغَ الْاَطْفَالُ مِنْكُمُ الْحُلُمَ فَلْيَسْتَاْذِنُوْا كَمَا اسْتَاْذَنَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۵۹﴾[67]

Earlier in verse 31, slaves and immature children were exempted from the condition of seeking permission that was imposed before entering houses. Later, it was said that on three occasions, they too should seek permission. These occasions are mentioned in these verses. The reason for this special precaution was that these are times of privacy between a husband and a wife. The times before *fajr* and after *ishā'* being occasions of privacy is evident. Afternoon is also a time of rest. This was specially the case in Arabia, where people would take an afternoon nap shielding themselves from

67. Believers! Let your slave men and women and those who have yet to reach maturity ask permission on three occasions: first, before the *fajr* prayer; second, in the afternoon when you take off your garments and after the *'ishā'* prayer. These three occasions are times of your privacy. At other times, it shall be no offence for you or them to come without permission because you do go around meeting one another. In this way, God explains His revelations to you and God is All-Knowing and All-Wise. And when the children among you reach maturity, let them also ask your permission as those before them would do. In this manner, God explains His revelations to you and God is All-Knowing and All-Wise.

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the heat of the sun. If on these three occasions, slaves and children were to enter the house without taking permission, it was possible that may see the people of the household in a situation which is not appropriate for them to see. For this reason, this restriction was imposed. Moreover, this was done gradually so that it may not weigh down heavily on people. Except for these three occasions, permission was needed. The wisdom for this is stated in the words: "because you do go around meeting one another." Thus God did not want them to be put in a spot of difficulty.

It is further clarified that immature children are exempted from seeking permission as long as they remain immature. As soon as they reach maturity, they will have to follow all the restrictions imposed on others. They will not be given any concession merely because since childhood, they have been regularly coming into the houses.

It may be observed that at the end of both these verses, it is stated that they were revealed as an explanation of the earlier directives and that this explanation is based on God's knowledge and wisdom. It is God Who knows what directives should be given for the reform and instruction of people and in what gradual sequence they should be given.

وَ الْقَوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ الّٰتِیْ لَا یَرْجُوْنَ نِكَاحًا فَلَیْسَ عَلَیْهِنَّ جُنَاحٌ اَنْ یَّضَعْنَ ثِیَابَهُنَّ غَیْرَ مُتَبَرِّجٰتٍۭ بِزِیْنَةٍ ؕ وَ اَنْ یَّسْتَعْفِفْنَ خَیْرٌ لَّهُنَّ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ سَمِیْعٌ عَلِیْمٌ ﴿۶۰﴾[68]

This verse too is from among the explanatory ones. Earlier on in verse 31, one of the directives given to women was that when non-maḥram relatives are present in the house, they must cover their bosoms with shawls. In the verse under discussion, it is stated that if elderly women do not do so, it would not be any offence; however, they can only do so if they do not have any intention of displaying their embellishments, though even in this age, it is more desirable that they do not dispense with their shawls. This concession for elderly ladies is to provide them with ease. However, it also has an element of trial for them. Just as many men who grow old still have youthful desires, in a similar way, there are women who grow old but they still want to show off their ornaments and affluence. Since this tendency in itself is a trial for a person's faith, they are warned that they must not misuse this concession.

The attributes of God at the end of the verse are meant to warn the addressees: everyone should know that nothing is hidden from God. He hears and knows all.

لَیْسَ عَلَی الْاَعْمٰی حَرَجٌ وَّ لَا عَلَی الْاَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ وَّ لَا عَلَی الْمَرِیْضِ حَرَجٌ وَّ لَا عَلٰۤی اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَنْ تَاْكُلُوْا مِنْۢ بُیُوْتِكُمْ اَوْ بُیُوْتِ اٰبَآىِٕكُمْ اَوْ بُیُوْتِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ اَوْ بُیُوْتِ اِخْوَانِكُمْ اَوْ بُیُوْتِ اَخَوٰتِكُمْ اَوْ بُیُوْتِ اَعْمَامِكُمْ اَوْ بُیُوْتِ عَمّٰتِكُمْ اَوْ بُیُوْتِ اَخْوَالِكُمْ اَوْ

68. And there is no harm if aged women who have no hope of marriage discard their shawls if they do not have any intention to display embellishments. And if they too exercise caution, it is better for them. And God hears all and knows all.

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بُيُوْتِ خٰلٰتِكُمْ اَوْ مَا مَلَكْتُمْ مَّفَاتِحَهٗٓ اَوْ صَدِيْقِكُمْ ؕ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ اَنْ تَاْكُلُوْا جَمِيْعًا اَوْ اَشْتَاتًا ؕ فَاِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ بُيُوْتًا فَسَلِّمُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِكُمْ تَحِيَّةً مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ مُبٰرَكَةً طَيِّبَةً ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾[69]

This verse too is from among the explanatory verses. It seems that when the aforementioned checks in coming into a house were imposed, some people thought that Islam wants to curb their social freedom and that it was no longer easy for them especially to freely visit their relatives, close ones and friends. There were many people who were handicapped and because of this compulsion were dependent on their relatives. They too thought that their freedom had been curtailed. Since in the times of *jāhiliyyah*, people had unlimited freedom in this matter, the limits imposed were considered a burden by people. In order to dispel the doubts of such people, it is explained that by imposing these precautionary measures, the purpose is not to deprive the blind, the lame and the sick from the support of their friends and relatives. Nor is it intended that people sever social relations. People are allowed to come and go and visit one another and eat and drink whether individually or collectively in functions. There is no restriction on this. What is required of them is to say *salām* when they enter the houses of people because it is a blessed and pure invocation and greeting. It enhances harmony in mutual relationships and closes fissures for Satan's interventions. The implication is that people should not regard them as a curtailment of their freedom; the purpose is entirely their own well-being.

The words اَوْ مَا مَلَكْتُمْ مَّفَاتِحَهٗٓ in my opinion refer to houses whose financial responsibility is take up by someone. For example, if a person is a guardian of an orphan.

The last sentence shows that this verse has been revealed as an explanation of an earlier directive, as has been alluded before. The words "so that you may understand," refers to the fact that those people who regard these directives to be uncalled for restrictions are a mistaken. The Qur'ān has given this explanation so that this incorrect understanding of people is rectified and they understand the benefits and blessings of these directives.

The reason that all relatives and near of kin are mentioned separately in this verse is that the Arabs did not live in a joint family system. After marriage, people would start living independently. Also evident from this mention is what has been alluded to earlier by me: these directives refer to the norms and dress-code men and women should observe when relatives and people of trust visit their places. Here, norms and

69. There is neither any restriction on the blind, on the lame, on the sick nor on your own selves whether you eat from your houses or your fathers' or grandfathers' or your mothers' or your brothers' or your sisters' or your paternal uncles' or your paternal aunts' or your maternal uncles' or your maternal aunts' or from those who are dependent on you or from your friends', whether you eat together or separately. However, when you enter houses, say *salām* to your people which is a blessed and noble invocation prescribed by God. God thus explains to you His revelations so that you may understand.

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dress-code which women should observe when they go out of their houses are not mentioned. This outside-the-house code of conduct is stated in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, as alluded to earlier and will insha'Allāh be explained there in detail.

اِنَّمَا الۡمُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ وَاِذَا كَانُوۡا مَعَهٗ عَلٰٓى اَمۡرٍ جَامِعٍ لَّمۡ يَذۡهَبُوۡا حَتّٰى يَسۡتَاۡذِنُوۡهُ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ يَسۡتَاۡذِنُوۡنَكَ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيۡنَ يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ ۚ فَاِذَا اسۡتَاۡذَنُوۡكَ لِبَعۡضِ شَاۡنِهِمۡ فَاۡذَنۡ لِّمَنۡ شِئۡتَ مِنۡهُمۡ وَاسۡتَغۡفِرۡ لَهُمُ اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ ﴿۶۲﴾[70]

This and the remaining verses relate to the hypocrites who were last mentioned in verse 57. Concomitant indications show that these verses were revealed later as a warning and admonition. For this reason, they have been placed with verses that were revealed later so that their real significance can be gauged. It is also evident that the word faith here refers to its complete meaning.

The words "for some collective task" show the resolve of the believers in contrast to the hypocrites; on such occasions they do not whisk away without seeking permission as the latter do. Those who seek this permission are real believers. This means that those who do not follow this decorum are not believers. They are hypocrites.

The verse informs the Prophet (sws) that he can give permission to whomsoever of the believers he wants to for any genuine task they may need to undertake. It is evident from this that though seeking this permission is not desirable because there is nothing greater than being in the company of the messenger and to support him in his responsibilities especially when some collective need is at hand; however, keeping in view human weaknesses, the Prophet (sws) can given this permission to whomsoever he wants to and should pray for that person's forgiveness for this weakness.

لَا تَجۡعَلُوۡا دُعَآءَ الرَّسُوۡلِ بَيۡنَكُمۡ كَدُعَآءِ بَعۡضِكُمۡ بَعۡضًا ؕ قَدۡ يَعۡلَمُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيۡنَ يَتَسَلَّلُوۡنَ مِنۡكُمۡ لِوَاذًا ۚ فَلۡيَحۡذَرِ الَّذِيۡنَ يُخَالِفُوۡنَ عَنۡ اَمۡرِهٖۤ اَنۡ تُصِيۡبَهُمۡ فِتۡنَةٌ اَوۡ يُصِيۡبَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ اَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۶۳﴾[71]

Though the address is general, concomitant indications show that it is directed at the

70. Only they are believers who have strong faith in God and His Messenger. And when they are with the Messenger for some collective task, they do not go away from there unless they seek permission from him. Those who go after seeking permission from you, only they are the ones who have faith in God and His Messenger. So, when they seek permission from you for some need they have, you can give permission to whomsoever you like and pray to God for their forgiveness. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

71. Do not regard the way you address the messenger to be similar to how you address one another. God fully knows those among you who have been secretly slipping away while hiding behind others. So, those people who evading the Messenger's directive have been opposing him should fear that a trial may afflict them or a painful punishment visit them.

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hypocrites.

In قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللّٰهُ, an incomplete verb is suppressed before the indefinite verb. The verb تَسَلَّلَ means "to secretly slip away" and لِوَاذًا means "to use one another as a barrier."

This verse admonishes the hypocrites that God has always been aware of people who slip away secretly hiding behind one another from the meetings called by the Prophet (sws). These hypocrites would contend that if they are held accountable for this act, they could present the excuse that they never got to know the Prophet's directive.

In the sentence فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِيْنَ يُخَالِفُوْنَ عَنْ اَمْرِهٖٓ اَنْ تُصِيْبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ اَوْ يُصِيْبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ the verb يُخَالِفُ encompasses the meaning of evasion and going away. The hypocrites would oppose the Prophet (sws) by evading and drawing away from him. Because of their cowardice, they would always verbally profess belief but would try to escape in a clandestine way.

اَلَآ اِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ قَدْ يَعْلَمُ مَآ اَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ ۭ وَيَوْمَ يُرْجَعُوْنَ اِلَيْهِ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوْا ۭ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٦٤﴾[72]

This is the final admonition sounded to the hypocrites in this *sūrah*.

The verse begins with a direct address: "Listen! Whatever is in the heavens and the earth, all belongs to God alone. God is well aware of every situation that you may be in." Then the address becomes indirect: "And the day they are returned to Him, He shall tell them whatever they would have done. And God is fully aware of everything."

With these words, I come to an end to the explanation of the last *sūrah* of this chapter. May God forgive me for my blemishes and let what has been understood correctly enter the hearts of people.

وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوٰنَا اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and our last words are that gratitude be to God, Lord of the worlds).

Raḥmānābād
24th September 1973

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72. Listen! Whatever is in the heavens and the earth, all belongs to God alone. God is well aware of every situation that you may be in. And the day they are returned to Him, He shall tell them whatever they would have done. And God is fully aware of everything.

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Tadabbur e Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Furqān (25)

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Sūrah al-Furqān

A Brief Review of Sūrahs of the Fourth Chapter

The fourth chapter of the Qur'ān begins with Sūrah al-Furqān. Eight *sūrahs* of this chapter are Makkan. They are: al-Furqān, al-Shu'arā', al-Naml, al-Qaṣaṣ, al-Rūm, Luqmān and al-Sajdah. Only Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, the last *sūrah* is Madīnan. The principle of *sūrahs* occurring in pairs can be witnessed in this chapter also, just as it can be in others. However, the status of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb is that of a summary of the whole chapter and its supplement. This is much like Sūrah al-Nūr of the third chapter. All phases of the preaching mission of Prophet Muḥammad (sws) – warning, migration and war – as well as all basic topics as monotheism, prophethood and the hereafter are also discussed. However, the style and nature of reasoning of this chapter is broadly distinct from the rest of the chapters.

The comprehensive theme of this *sūrah* is affirmation of prophethood. In the various *sūrah*s of this chapter, answers have been given to the various objections raised by the Quraysh and their allies on the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) and divinity of the Qur'ān. At the same time, the real status of the Prophet (sws) and the Qur'ān has also been explained. In this regard, glad tidings are given to the believers in this world and the next once they pass through the phase of trial. On the other hand, those who are persisting in their denial are warned of their fate once the truth is conclusively delivered to them.

Theme of the Sūrah

The theme of this *sūrah* is to defend the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws). Answers have been given to the various objections raised by his opponents, after citing them. At the same time, the real motives of these opponents in raising in these objections and rejections are alluded to. Also, further arguments are given on the issues that the Qur'ān discussed which were a cause of their aversion. They, for example, include calling them to monotheism and warning them of punishment.

Analysis of the Meanings

Verses (1-9): The Qur'ān has been revealed by the most blessed being as the most blessed and merciful thing. However, those who deny monotheism and the advent of the Hereafter regard it to be to a concoction and a conspiracy. A reference is made to the propaganda worked by the opponents of the Prophet (sws) to lead people away from him and the Qur'ān.

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Verses (10-34): Answers are given to the accusations levelled against the Prophet (sws) by his adversaries and the real motive of their animosity is alluded to. The Prophet (sws) and the believers are then urged to show patience and the evil fate of the rejecters is depicted.

Verses (35-44): A brief reference to the history of messengers and their rejecters to urge the Prophet (sws) and his companions to be patient. They are told that they should not think that those who are denying the Qur'ān should be regarded as men of insight. They are worse than animals and slaves to their desires. The Prophet's (sws) only responsibility is to conclusively communicate the truth to them. They will continue to tread the path they are treading and encounter the fate destined for them. His responsibility is to fulfil his obligation and not to forcibly make them accept the truth.

Verses (45-60): Some arguments drawn from the world around human beings in favour of two basic issues in the message of the Qur'ān – monotheism and hereafter – are alluded to. The Prophet (sws) is urged to conclusively convey the truth to his opponents disregarding their demands of being shown miracles. All that is needed to be clarified for the conclusive communication of the truth has been mentioned in the Qur'ān in a variety of styles. If the people do not accept them, the only responsibility of the Prophet (sws) is to warn and deliver glad tidings to them. After fulfilling his obligation, he should leave them to themselves and not give importance to the baseless objections they have invented as excuses to deny the Qur'ān. He should trust God. He is aware of everything. He will deal with people according to what they are worthy of.

Verses (61-77): The nights and days of this world are enough as reminders and admonitions if a person wants to be reminded and be grateful to his Lord. Those who are humble and penitent do not show arrogance the way these rebellious ones are displaying. They have an entirely different attitude. After that, the traits of those people are mentioned who keep God in their remembrance and are grateful to Him. In the end, the arrogant elements of the Quraysh are warned: if they have been given importance and educated in a thorough way, it is not because God needs them for some of His tasks; the only purpose is to reform them. If they do not give due regard to this favour of God, they will definitely encounter the evil consequences of this behaviour.

This analysis of the meanings fully explains the theme and structure of the *sūrah*. With God's name, I now begin with the exegesis of this *sūrah* واللہ الموفق للخیر والسداد (God guides us to what is good and correct).

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Section 1: Verses (1-9)

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

تَبٰرَکَ الَّذِیۡ نَزَّلَ الۡفُرۡقَانَ عَلٰی عَبۡدِہٖ لِیَکُوۡنَ لِلۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ نَذِیۡرَا ۙ﴿۱﴾ الَّذِیۡ لَہٗ مُلۡکُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ وَ لَمۡ
یَتَّخِذۡ وَلَدًا وَّ لَمۡ یَکُنۡ لَّہٗ شَرِیۡکٌ فِی الۡمُلۡکِ وَ خَلَقَ کُلَّ شَیۡءٍ فَقَدَّرَہٗ تَقۡدِیۡرَا ﴿۲﴾ وَ اتَّخَذُوۡا مِنۡ دُوۡنِہٖۤ اٰلِہَۃً لَّا
یَخۡلُقُوۡنَ شَیۡـًٔا وَّ ہُمۡ یُخۡلَقُوۡنَ وَ لَا یَمۡلِکُوۡنَ لِاَنۡفُسِہِمۡ ضَرًّا وَّ لَا نَفۡعًا وَّ لَا یَمۡلِکُوۡنَ مَوۡتًا وَّ لَا حَیٰوۃً وَّ لَا نُشُوۡرًا ﴿۳﴾ وَ
قَالَ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡۤا اِنۡ ہٰذَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اِفۡکُۨ افۡتَرٰىہُ وَ اَعَانَہٗ عَلَیۡہِ قَوۡمٌ اٰخَرُوۡنَ ۚۖ فَقَدۡ جَآءُوۡ ظُلۡمًا وَّ زُوۡرًا ۚۛ﴿۴﴾ وَ قَالُوۡۤا
اَسَاطِیۡرُ الۡاَوَّلِیۡنَ اکۡتَتَبَہَا فَہِیَ تُمۡلٰی عَلَیۡہِ بُکۡرَۃً وَّ اَصِیۡلًا ﴿۵﴾ قُلۡ اَنۡزَلَہُ الَّذِیۡ یَعۡلَمُ السِّرَّ فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ
الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ اِنَّہٗ کَانَ غَفُوۡرًا رَّحِیۡمًا ﴿۶﴾ وَ قَالُوۡا مَالِ ہٰذَا الرَّسُوۡلِ یَاۡکُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَ یَمۡشِیۡ فِی الۡاَسۡوَاقِ ؕ لَوۡلَاۤ اُنۡزِلَ اِلَیۡہِ
مَلَکٌ فَیَکُوۡنَ مَعَہٗ نَذِیۡرَا ۙ﴿۷﴾ اَوۡ یُلۡقٰۤی اِلَیۡہِ کَنۡزٌ اَوۡ تَکُوۡنُ لَہٗ جَنَّۃٌ یَّاۡکُلُ مِنۡہَا ؕ وَ قَالَ الظّٰلِمُوۡنَ اِنۡ تَتَّبِعُوۡنَ اِلَّا
رَجُلًا مَّسۡحُوۡرًا ﴿۸﴾ اُنۡظُرۡ کَیۡفَ ضَرَبُوۡا لَکَ الۡاَمۡثَالَ فَضَلُّوۡا فَلَا یَسۡتَطِیۡعُوۡنَ سَبِیۡلًا ﴿۹﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

Very blessed is the Being Who has revealed the Book that distinguishes good from evil to His servant so that it can warn the people of the world. He for Whom is the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. And He has not made any children for Himself and none shares His sovereignty. And He has created everything and prescribed a due measure for it. And people have set up other deities besides Him who do not create anything; they themselves have been created and also do not have any authority to benefit or harm themselves. They neither have any authority over death nor life. And also do not have the authority to raise the dead. (1-3)

And the disbelievers say: "This is mere falsehood fabricated by this person and some other people have helped him in this task." By saying this, they are guilty of both injustice and falsehood. And they say: "These are fables of the past which he has had written. Thus, now they are imparted to him morning and evening in written form." Tell them: It has been revealed by the Being Who knows the secret of the heavens and the earth. Indeed, He is very Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (4-6)

And they say: "What kind of a messenger is he? He eats food and roams around in markets! Why was not an angel sent to him that he may have accompanied him to warn people or some treasure was sent down to him or there was an orchard for him from where he could have earned his livelihood" – and these unjust people said: "You people are following a person who is under a magical spell." See what kind of

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sarcastic remarks they make about you. Thus, they are completely lost and not being able to find any way. (7-9)

Explanation

تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِیْ نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلٰی عَبْدِهٖ لِیَكُوْنَ لِلْعٰلَمِیْنَ نَذِیْرَا ۙ﴿۱﴾ [1]

Just as there is exaggeration and emphasis in تعاظم and in تعالی and in words of similar construction, there exists this exaggeration in تَبٰرَكَ also. People must give due importance to this favour of the very benevolent and blessed God in revealing this Book. They must try to mend their ways in the light of guidance it provides. They must not raise baseless objections to oppose it and should not demand any miracle or sign of punishment from God's messenger. Had God wanted, He would have sent His messenger with such punishment instead of sending him with this Book. This task is not the slightest difficult for Him. However, out of His unfathomable mercy, He wanted to show people a light which can show them the dangers they can encounter and which can lead them to the path of success. By calling the Qur'ān as Furqān, the purpose is to explicate that the Book itself is a conclusive proof of the claims it makes and of the veracity of its bearer. Unfortunate are the people who, instead of benefiting from this supreme favour given from the hands of the Prophet (sws), are demanding signs from him that may destroy them.

The words عَلٰی عَبْدِهٖ are used for Muḥammad (sws) in the verse. There is a special occasion for directing attention towards him in such an affectionate way. In the succeeding verses, objections of the disbelievers are cited which they would raise in a very humiliating way against the Prophet (sws). These objections were generally raised by the affluent people from Makkah and Ṭā'if. Being conceited because of their wealth, they would mock at the meagre worldly resources of the Prophet (sws) and present this as a primary argument to refute his prophethood. While keeping in mind this mentality of these arrogant people, it is stated that after the favour of the Furqān which the Almighty has revealed to His special servant, nothing more is needed by him. In order to complete the mission of warning people, he has the perfect provision with him.

This verse forms the introduction of this *sūrah*. It is has been explained here in detail and more details are coming up ahead.

الَّذِیْ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلَمْ یَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَّلَمْ یَكُنْ لَّهٗ شَرِیْكٌ فِی الْمُلْكِ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَیْءٍ فَقَدَّرَهٗ تَقْدِیْرًا ﴿۲﴾ [2]

In the earlier verse, God has referred to His beneficence. In this verse, He has alluded

1. Very blessed is the Being Who has revealed the Book that distinguishes good from evil to His servant so that it can warn the people of the world.

2. He for Whom is the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. And He has not made any children for Himself and none shares His sovereignty. And He has created everything and prescribed a due measure for it.

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to His power and oneness. The purpose is to remind people of the fact that He Who has revealed this Book to warn His creatures is the sovereign of the heavens and the earth. For this reason, the Book He has sent down should not be considered as the petition of a suppliant. It is the directive of the real king of this universe that has to be obeyed come what may. If it is rejected, it should be known that the One Who has revealed it is not someone who is incapable of revenge. He will avenge it and when He does so, none can stop Him.

Consider next the words "And He has not made any children for Himself and none shares His sovereignty." The implication is that if people have assumed that God has children and have started worshipping them and think that they will be able to save them from God, they should do away with this baseless notion. Neither does He have a son nor a daughter nor any partner in His sovereignty. He is the sole owner of His kingdom and does need any partner or helper.

Next the words "and He has created everything and prescribed a due measure for it" present an evidence of God's oneness. Nothing can dare exceed or fall short of the measure that has been appointed for it. If He created human beings, He set a limit to their lives. Similarly, the clouds and the winds abide by the bounds set for them. The sun and the moon which are being worshipped by the foolish are themselves confined to a path fixed for them. By their very existence, they bear witness that they have been created by a powerful and wise God. At other instances, the words are:

وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِيْ لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَّهَا ۭ ذٰلِكَ تَقْدِيْرُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ (٣٦:٣٨)

And the sun revolves according to its prescribed course. This is the planning of God, the Mighty One, the All-Knowing (36:38)

وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَاۗىِٕنُهٗ ۡ وَمَا نُنَزِّلُهٗٓ اِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ (١٥: ٢١)

There is nothing whose treasures are not with Us. But We only send it down in a specific measure. (15:21)

وَاتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اٰلِهَةً لَّا يَخْلُقُوْنَ شَيْـــًٔا وَّهُمْ يُخْلَقُوْنَ وَلَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ لِاَنْفُسِهِمْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا نَفْعًا وَّلَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ مَوْتًا وَّلَا حَيٰوةً وَّلَا نُشُوْرًا ۝[3]

What is discussed earlier is further clarified with an element of amazement: the reality about God and the Qur'ān has just been delineated but such are these adversaries of the Qur'ān and the Messenger that they have set up such feeble partners with God. The implication is that to deny the Qur'ān on the basis of such hypothetical deities is their extreme foolishness.

3. And people have set up other deities besides Him who do not create anything; they themselves have been created and also do not have any authority to benefit or harm themselves. They neither have any authority over death nor life. And also do not have the authority to raise the dead.

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وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اِفْكُ ِۨافْتَرٰىهُ وَاَعَانَهٗ عَلَيْهِ قَوْمٌ اٰخَرُوْنَ ۚ فَقَدْ جَآءُوْ ظُلْمًا وَّ زُوْرًا ۚ ﴿۴﴾ [4]

This verse depicts the propaganda worked by them to disillusion the masses from the Messenger and the Qur'ān. It has been mentioned at other instances that the leaders did not have the courage to deny the eloquence and the potent nature of the Qur'ān. They were forced to acknowledge this feature. However, they wanted to dispel the notion of its divinity among the masses. They wanted to have it placed among the works of accomplished poets and powerful orators. Their real issue was their malice against the messengerhood of Muḥammad (sws) and the claim that Qur'ān was from God. They would vehemently deny its divinity and would regard it to be a fabrication of the Prophet's fancy. They contended that he falsely ascribes it to God to create a false aura of its superiority.

The words "and some other people have helped him in this task" depict another of their false claims. They made this addition because the Qur'ān contains the anecdotes and teachings of the past messengers which the Prophet (sws) had no means of knowing. The question that arose about them was that if the Qur'ān was not God's word, then how did the Prophet (sws) get to know all these tales and that too with such detail and veracity which the bearers of the past scriptures did not know of? Thus they made this addition that some other individuals have a share in this conspiracy. This accusation carries an element of ambiguity in it. The reason for this is that when the accusation itself is false, there is no other option but to make an ambiguous accusation. If an explicit style is adopted, the fake claim will be exposed. Who did the adversaries of the Prophet (sws) refer to by these words? Our exegetes have cited various opinions in this regard. In my opinion, it was but appropriate to keep the blame vague. The reason was that the purpose of the accusers was to merely make an accusation and not to point to a particular person who was helping the Prophet (sws) in this matter. By making this accusation, the Quraysh tried to give this impression to their masses that the part of the Qur'ān which is similar to previous divine scriptures and the wisdom they enshrine is not because of any divine revelation; in fact, some educated individuals from the People of the Book or other nations have become the Prophet's companions and it is they who inform him of these details; the Prophet (sws) then presents this content in his eloquent tongue and ascribes it to an angel of God. Readers may look up the explanation of verse 103 of Sūrah al-Naḥl.

The word جَآءُوْ in فَقَدْ جَآءُوْ ظُلْمًا وَّ زُوْرًا means "to perpetrate." This usage is common in Arabic. The word ظُلْم signifies the polytheism mentioned in the previous verse and the word زُوْر refers to their statement about the Qur'ān cited earlier. This last verse ends without any comment on their wrongdoings it mentions. This is meant to point to the

4. And the disbelievers say: "This is mere falsehood fabricated by this person and some other people have helped him in this task." By saying this, they are guilty of both injustice and falsehood.

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heinous fate these people will meet after they have been guilty of committing such great crimes with such obduracy.

وَقَالُوْٓا اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ اكْتَتَبَهَا فَهِيَ تُمْلٰى عَلَيْهِ بُكْرَةً وَّاَصِيْلًا ﴿٥﴾[5]

The lexical meaning of the word اكتتب فلانٌ is سأل ان يكتب له (he requested to write something for him).

The preposition على after تُمْلٰى shows that the verb encompasses the meaning تلقى عليه of or تقرء عليه. Thus it can mean both "they are dictated to him," as well as "they are imparted to him in written form." Here the second of these meanings is implied, as the Quraysh knew that the Prophet (sws) was unlettered.

This verse further explains the earlier accusation. The implication is that neither this Book has any awe-inspiring wisdom in it nor is the claim of its presenter true that it is from God and has nothing to do with his own fancy or desire. It is in fact made up of anecdotes of past prophets and nations intertwined with truth and falsehood. These anecdotes have been written by others at his behest. In this way, these people tried to do away with the effect of the Qur'ān's wisdom and would cast doubt on its divine origin. Obviously, this effort was in vain. The way the Qur'ān presented history was a heavy blow to the pride of the arrogant leaders of the Quraysh. They could see their horrible future in the contents mirrored by it. For this reason, they would get irritated and call it a fable of the past. However, to call reality a fable can neither give assurance to one's own heart nor can it deceive others. If, as alleged by the Quraysh, one Salmān Fārisī or an Abū Fakīh Rūmī or a few People of the Book could come together and author a Book like the Qur'ān, the Quraysh had thousands of Arabs and non-Arabs and People of the Book at their disposal. Why could they not produce something like the Qur'ān with their help? This could have nullified the claim of the Qur'ān being a miracle. However, when after repeated challenges thrown by the Qur'ān, they could not produce a book like the Qur'ān, who could have believed their baseless claim that this Book has been authored by certain non-Arabs or by the People of the Book. The Qur'ān did not even refute this because it was an obviously baseless claim. In the succeeding verse, it has pointed to the actual reality which also has a subtle sarcasm on these foolish undertakings of the Quraysh.

قُلْ اَنْزَلَهُ الَّذِيْ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٦﴾[6]

The implication of this verse is that such is the all-embracing knowledge of God that

5. And they say: "These are fables of the past which he has had written. Thus, now they are imparted to him morning and evening in written form."

6. Tell them: It has been revealed by the Being Who knows the secret of the heavens and the earth. Indeed, He is very Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

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He does not need any Arab or non-Arab's help to author this Book. The greatest of scholars can obtain insight and guidance from it but he cannot add to the knowledge and wisdom of this Book, let alone authoring it. It is evident from every line of this Book that it has been revealed by One Who has knowledge of all the secrets of this universe. He is aware of its inner and outer aspects as well as of its origin and end. Thus He has cited lessons of the past, explained responsibilities of the present and unveiled the consequences of the future.

Since God is forgiving and merciful, He has revealed this Book so that those who want to repent and mend their ways are given this opportunity and are thus able to earn His mercy. The implication is that He could have sent down His scourge knowing the attitude of the enemies of the truth. However, since He is merciful, He is not in haste to do so. He in fact wants people to adopt the path of guidance so that they can become worthy of His forgiveness. Present in these attributes is also the indication that God nevertheless is aware of all affairs and circumstances. If people do not adopt the right path, its consequence is destined to come before them.

وَقَالُوْا مَالِ هٰذَا الرَّسُوْلِ يَاْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِيْ فِي الْاَسْوَاقِ ۭ لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ فَيَكُوْنَ مَعَهٗ نَذِيْرًا ۝ اَوْ يُلْقٰٓى اِلَيْهِ كَنْزٌ اَوْ تَكُوْنُ لَهٗ جَنَّةٌ يَّاْكُلُ مِنْهَا ۭ وَقَالَ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ اِنْ تَتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا رَجُلًا مَّسْحُوْرًا ۝[7]

These verses cite some objections of the adversaries. The style مَالِ هٰذَا الرَّسُوْلِ encompasses both amazement and sarcasm. Their implication was that if God had to send a messenger, why did He send a human being like them? He has a whole army of angels. Why was not one of them sent as a messenger? If this person has none of these traits, why should they regard him to be God's envoy?

The last sentence "You people are following a person who is under a magical spell" is addressed by these people to the believers. They are following someone who has lost his senses since a spell of magic has been weaved upon him.

اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوْا لَكَ الْاَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوْا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ سَبِيْلًا ۝[8]

This verse also occurs as verse 48 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl in precisely the same words. It has been explained there that just as the idiom ضَرَبَ الْاَمْثَالَ means to cite a parable, it also means to raise an objection on someone or to be pass sarcastic remarks on

7. And they say: "What kind of a messenger is he? He eats food and roams around in markets! Why was not an angel sent to him that he may have accompanied him to warn people or some treasure was sent down to him or there was an orchard for him from where he could have earned his livelihood" – and these unjust people said: "You people are following a person who is under a magical spell."

8. See what kind of sarcastic remarks they make about you. Thus, they are completely lost and not being able to find any way.

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someone. It has been used to connote a false objection I verse 33 ahead. Here it is used in the latter sense. These people are not able to find a way out from their imbroglio and utter whatever comes to their mind. They do find any valid objection to state and just want to vent their frenzy. But how can they deny such a reality. It may be kept in mind that when a person deliberately denies something true, he displays a senseless attitude – the very one found in these objections.

Section II: Verses (10-34)

In this section, the afore-mentioned objections are cited, their motives are highlighted and the consequence of this blind animosity is also depicted. In this regard, some new objections are also discussed, and the Prophet (sws) and his companions are urged to ignore all this nonsense with patience and perseverance. Readers may now proceed to study these verses in this background.

Text and Translation

تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِيْٓ اِنْ شَآءَ جَعَلَ لَكَ خَيْرًا مِّنْ ذٰلِكَ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۙ وَيَجْعَلْ لَّكَ قُصُوْرًا ﴿١٠﴾ بَلْ
كَذَّبُوْا بِالسَّاعَةِ ۣ وَاَعْتَدْنَا لِمَنْ كَذَّبَ بِالسَّاعَةِ سَعِيْرًا ﴿١١﴾ اِذَا رَاَتْهُمْ مِّنْ مَّكَانٍۭ بَعِيْدٍ سَمِعُوْا لَهَا تَغَيُّظًا وَّ
زَفِيْرًا ﴿١٢﴾ وَاِذَآ اُلْقُوْا مِنْهَا مَكَانًا ضَيِّقًا مُّقَرَّنِيْنَ دَعَوْا هُنَالِكَ ثُبُوْرًا ﴿١٣﴾ لَا تَدْعُوا الْيَوْمَ ثُبُوْرًا وَّاحِدًا وَّادْعُوْا
ثُبُوْرًا كَثِيْرًا ﴿١٤﴾ قُلْ اَذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ اَمْ جَنَّةُ الْخُلْدِ الَّتِيْ وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُوْنَ ۭ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَزَاۗءً وَّمَصِيْرًا ﴿١٥﴾ لَهُمْ فِيْهَا مَا
يَشَاۗءُوْنَ خٰلِدِيْنَ ۭ كَانَ عَلٰي رَبِّكَ وَعْدًا مَّسْـُٔوْلًا ﴿١٦﴾ وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ فَيَقُوْلُ
ءَاَنْتُمْ اَضْلَلْتُمْ عِبَادِيْ هٰٓؤُلَاۗءِ اَمْ هُمْ ضَلُّوا السَّبِيْلَ ﴿١٧﴾ قَالُوْا سُبْحٰنَكَ مَا كَانَ يَنْۢبَغِيْ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّتَّخِذَ مِنْ
دُوْنِكَ مِنْ اَوْلِيَاۗءَ وَلٰكِنْ مَّتَّعْتَهُمْ وَاٰبَاۗءَهُمْ حَتّٰى نَسُوا الذِّكْرَ ۚ وَكَانُوْا قَوْمًۢا بُوْرًا ﴿١٨﴾ فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوْكُمْ بِمَا تَقُوْلُوْنَ ۙ
فَمَا تَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ صَرْفًا وَّلَا نَصْرًا ۚ وَمَنْ يَّظْلِمْ مِّنْكُمْ نُذِقْهُ عَذَابًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿١٩﴾ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ
اِلَّآ اِنَّهُمْ لَيَاْكُلُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشُوْنَ فِي الْاَسْوَاقِ ۭ وَجَعَلْنَا بَعْضَكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ فِتْنَةً ۭ اَتَصْبِرُوْنَ ۚ وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ بَصِيْرًا ﴿٢٠﴾
وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ لِقَاۗءَنَا لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْمَلٰۗىِٕكَةُ اَوْ نَرٰى رَبَّنَا ۭ لَقَدِ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَعَتَوْ عُتُوًّا
كَبِيْرًا ﴿٢١﴾ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ الْمَلٰۗىِٕكَةَ لَا بُشْرٰى يَوْمَىِٕذٍ لِّلْمُجْرِمِيْنَ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ حِجْرًا مَّحْجُوْرًا ﴿٢٢﴾ وَقَدِمْنَآ اِلٰى مَا
عَمِلُوْا مِنْ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنٰهُ هَبَاۗءً مَّنْثُوْرًا ﴿٢٣﴾ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ يَوْمَىِٕذٍ خَيْرٌ مُّسْتَقَرًّا وَّاَحْسَنُ مَقِيْلًا ﴿٢٤﴾ وَيَوْمَ

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تَشَقَّقُ السَّمَآءُ بِالْغَمَامِ وَنُزِّلَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ تَنْزِيْلًا ﴿٢٥﴾ اَلْمُلْكُ يَوْمَئِذِ ِالْحَقُّ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ ؕ وَكَانَ يَوْمًا عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ
عَسِيْرًا ﴿٢٦﴾ وَ يَوْمَ يَعَضُّ الظَّالِمُ عَلٰى يَدَيْهِ يَقُوْلُ يٰلَيْتَنِى اتَّخَذْتُ مَعَ الرَّسُوْلِ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٢٧﴾ يٰوَيْلَتٰى لَيْتَنِىْ لَمْ
اَتَّخِذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيْلًا ﴿٢٨﴾ لَقَدْ اَضَلَّنِىْ عَنِ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ اِذْ جَآءَنِىْ ؕ وَ كَانَ الشَّيْطٰنُ لِلْاِنْسَانِ خَذُوْلًا ﴿٢٩﴾ وَ قَالَ
الرَّسُوْلُ يٰرَبِّ اِنَّ قَوْمِى اتَّخَذُوْا هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ مَهْجُوْرًا ﴿٣٠﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِىٍّ عَدُوًّا مِّنَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ؕ وَكَفٰى
بِرَبِّكَ هَادِيًا وَّ نَصِيْرًا ﴿٣١﴾ وَ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْ لَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْاٰنُ جُمْلَةً وَّاحِدَةً ۚ كَذٰلِكَ ۚ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهٖ
فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنٰهُ تَرْتِيْلًا ﴿٣٢﴾ وَلَا يَاْتُوْنَكَ بِمَثَلٍ اِلَّا جِئْنٰكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَاَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيْرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ يُحْشَرُوْنَ عَلٰى
وُجُوْهِهِمْ اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَّاَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٣٤﴾

Extremely blessed is the Being who can bless you if He wants with much better things than this – orchards below which streams flow and make palaces for you. In fact, these people have denied the Day of Judgement and We have prepared Hell for those who deny the Day of Judgement. When it will see them from afar, they will hear its rage and roar. And when they will be cast into some narrow place in it while being tied up, they will call for their death at that time. Today, do not call for one death but call for many deaths. Ask them: Is this better or the eternal Paradise which is being promised to those who fear God. It will be their reward and their abode. In it will be everything for them that they wish for. They shall live in it forever. This is a promise of your Lord fulfilling which is His final responsibility. (10-16)

And bear in mind the day when He will gather them and those which they worship besides God. Thus, He will ask them: "Did you lead these servants of Mine astray or did they themselves lose the way?" They will reply: "God forbid, what right did We have to make others guardians besides You. In fact, you gave them and their forefathers the provisions of life until they forgot your remembrance and ended up as people ruined"– Here, they have regarded you to be liars in what you would say. So, now you can neither defer the punishment nor help yourselves in any way. And whoever among you will be guilty of oppression, We shall make him taste a great torment. (17-19)

And whichever messengers We sent before you, all ate food and roamed about in markets. And We have made you a trial for one another; so, speak up: "Would you show patience?" And your Lord is observing everything. (20)

And those who do not fear coming before Us, say: "Why were angels not sent down to us, or We could have directly observed God?" They regarded themselves to be very superior in their hearts and showed great arrogance. The day they will see the angels, there shall be no good news for these wrongdoers and they will cry out: "Refuge! Refuge!" And We shall move towards each deed they would have done and render it

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into scattered dust. On that Day, the dwellers of Paradise shall be in the best abode and in a grand resting place. (21-24)

And the day when the sky shall split apart with a cloud and group after group of angels shall be sent down, on that day, true sovereignty shall only belong to the Most Merciful God. And that day shall be very tough for the disbelievers. And the day when he who was unjust to his soul shall longingly bite his hand and say: "Would that I had chosen to be with the messenger. Alas! My misfortune! Would that I had not made so-and-so my friend! It was he who led me astray and diverted me from God's remembrance after it had come to me." And Satan is very unfaithful to human beings. And the messenger will say: "My Lord! The people of my nation totally ignored this Qur'ān." And in this way, We have made enemies from the wrongdoers for every prophet, and your Lord is sufficient for guidance and help. (25-31)

And these disbelievers said: "Why was this Qur'ān not revealed to him in a single instalment?" Thus have We done this so that We can strengthen your heart through this and We have revealed it gradually. And whatever objection these people will raise, We shall let you know its correct answer and best interpretation. Those who will be dragged on their faces towards Hell are the ones who are the worst with regard to their abode and ones who have lost their way the most. (32-34)

Explanation

تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِيْٓ اِنْ شَآءَ جَعَلَ لَكَ خَيْرًا مِّنْ ذٰلِكَ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۙ وَيَجْعَلْ لَّكَ قُصُوْرًا ﴿١٠﴾[9]

Just as the objections were cited by beginning with the word تَبٰرَكَ, the response to them has also been cited by beginning with the same word. The last of the objections cited in verse 8 is answered the foremost. It is stated God can give all these things to the Prophet (sws) and in fact will do one day. However, since these people regard this world to be all that there is and have no concept of the hereafter which is the real world, they feel proud of their worldly provisions and assets and make fun the Prophet (sws). The fact is that this world is not a place of reward; it is a place of trial. Scarcity and abundance are both forms of trial. He who succeeds in the hereafter will achieve eternal success and he who fails there will be doomed forever. Those who will succeed in the hereafter are the ones who fear God in this world.

بَلْ كَذَّبُوْا بِالسَّاعَةِ ۣ وَاَعْتَدْنَا لِمَنْ كَذَّبَ بِالسَّاعَةِ سَعِيْرًا ﴿١١﴾[10]

This verse points to the cause of their misunderstanding: the reason that they regard their success in this world to be a proof of being on the right path is that they have denied

9. Extremely blessed is the Being who can bless you if He wants with much better things than this – orchards below which streams flow and make palaces for you.

10. In fact, these people have denied the Day of Judgement and We have prepared Hell for those who deny the Day of Judgement.

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the hereafter. They very well know God has prepared Hell for those who are guilty of this denial regardless of the extent of lands and orchards they own in this world.

اِذَا رَاَتْهُمْ مِّنْ مَّكَانٍۭ بَعِيْدٍ سَمِعُوْا لَهَا تَغَيُّظًا وَّ زَفِيْرًا ﴿۱۲﴾[11]

The word تَغَيُّظ means "to rage with anger" and the word زَفِيْر means "to roar and shout." These are the traits of Hell prepared by God for these wrongdoers. It will rage with anger to seek revenge from them and roar like a lion when it sees them from afar.

وَاِذَآ اُلْقُوْا مِنْهَا مَكَانًا ضَيِّقًا مُّقَرَّنِيْنَ دَعَوْا هُنَالِكَ ثُبُوْرًا ﴿۱۳﴾[12]

This verse portrays how these wrongdoers will be punished in Hell. In verses 8-9 of Sūrah Humazah, it is said: اِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّؤْصَدَةٌ. فِيْ عَمَدٍ مُّمَدَّدَةٍ (they will be enshrouded in it, fastened to columns very high). Fetters and chains are also mentioned at another instance.

The word ثُبُوْر means "death and destruction." Death would be the only option these people would think of to escape from this punishment. But alas, even that will not be granted to them. At another instance, it is specified that death will attack them there from all sides but they will not die. Their condition in fact will be that they will neither live nor die.

لَا تَدْعُوا الْيَوْمَ ثُبُوْرًا وَّاحِدًا وَّادْعُوْا ثُبُوْرًا كَثِيْرًا ﴿۱۴﴾[13]

The implication of these words is that today they will face one calamity after the other and will call for death after each of them but to no avail. These words can be uttered literally from the keepers of Hell or could be a portrayal of the situation. This style has been explained at other instances.

قُلْ اَذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ اَمْ جَنَّةُ الْخُلْدِ الَّتِيْ وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُوْنَ ؕ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَزَآءً وَّمَصِيْرًا ﴿۱۵﴾ لَهُمْ فِيْهَا مَا يَشَآءُوْنَ خٰلِدِيْنَ ؕ كَانَ عَلٰى رَبِّكَ وَعْدًا مَّسْـُٔوْلًا ﴿۱۶﴾[14]

These verses mention the real purpose for which all these details of Hell have been mentioned. Since these people cannot look beyond this world, they show arrogance

11. When it will see them from afar, they will hear its rage and roar.

12. And when they will be cast into some narrow place in it while being tied up, they will call for their death at that time.

13. Today, do not call for one death but call for many deaths.

14. Ask them: Is this better or the eternal Paradise which is being promised to those who fear God. It will be their reward and their abode. In it will be everything for them that they wish for. They shall live in it forever. This is a promise of your Lord fulfilling which is His final responsibility.

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because of their palaces and orchards and mock at the believers for their indigence. If they had knowledge of the Hereafter and knew the punishment that awaits them there and the eternal reward that awaits the believers, they would have been envious of these indigent believers and wailed on their own misfortune. However, arrogance of their worldly riches has blinded them and they are not able to see beyond their own selves.

Four things are stated here about Paradise:

Firstly, it will be given to the believers as a reward of their deeds. God will assure them that they have achieved it because of their deeds and that they fully deserve it.

Secondly, it will be their eternal abode. They will not have the fear of being deprived from it.

Thirdly, they will get in it and continue to do so whatever they desire.

Fourthly, God has made a certain promise of giving it to the believers and it is obligatory upon Him to fulfil this promise. In fact, He is responsible for this before His servants.

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ فَيَقُوْلُ ءَاَنْتُمْ اَضْلَلْتُمْ عِبَادِيْ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اَمْ هُمْ ضَلُّوا السَّبِيْلَ ﴿١٧﴾ قَالُوْا سُبْحٰنَكَ مَا كَانَ يَنْۢبَغِيْ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّتَّخِذَ مِنْ دُوْنِكَ مِنْ اَوْلِيَآءَ وَلٰكِنْ مَّتَّعْتَهُمْ وَاٰبَآءَهُمْ حَتّٰى نَسُوا الذِّكْرَ ۚ وَكَانُوْا قَوْمًۢا بُوْرًا ﴿١٨﴾[15]

Mentioned earlier in verses 2-3 are the deities the Idolaters associated with God. On their basis, these Idolaters had become indifferent to the Hereafter and would make fun of the Qur'ān and the Messenger. The verses under discussion depict a dialogue between these deities and their worshippers. It is evident from this conversation that the affluence and riches possessed by these Idolaters made them forget God. They thought that in the first place the next world is a bluff and if it is a reality, there too they will succeed because they are leading such a successful life in this world.

It is evident from the answer depicted in this dialogue that it will be from the angels and the righteous who were actually worshipped. As far as the alleged deities of the Idolaters are concerned which have no basis, then though it is evident from the verse general words وَمَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ (who they worshipped) that they too would be gathered, but of course they will not be part of the conversation since they never existed. However, it is mentioned at other instances in the Qur'ān that these idols will be consigned to Hell together with their worshippers so that their fate becomes evident to them.

The answer of the angels and the righteous cited here is precisely the same as the

15. And bear in mind the day when He will gather them and those which they worship besides God. Thus, He will ask them: "Did you lead these servants of Mine astray or did they themselves lose the way?" They will reply: "God forbid, what right did We have to make others guardians besides You. In fact, you gave them and their forefathers the provisions of life until they forgot your remembrance and ended up as people ruined."

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one given through the tongue of Jesus (sws) in verses 115-118 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah. Readers my look it up.

What is mentioned by the words "in fact, you gave them and their forefathers the provisions of life until they forgot your remembrance," is mentioned thus in verse 16 of Sūrah al-Ḥadīd "these people enjoyed the provisions of life for a long time; for this reason their hears hardened." The word الذِّكْر (reminder) refers to the reminder sounded to these people by God regarding the hereafter so that they do not forget it. This subject is also brought up in verse 44 of Sūrah al-Anbiyā' and verse 45 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ. They can be looked up in case more explanation is needed.

The word بُوْرً is used for both singular and plural as well as masculine and feminine entities.

فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوْكُمْ بِمَا تَقُوْلُوْنَ ۙ فَمَا تَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ صَرْفًا وَّلَا نَصْرًا ۚ وَمَنْ يَّظْلِمْ مِّنْكُمْ نُذِقْهُ عَذَابًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿١٩﴾[16]

In deference to eloquence, a future event is mentioned in the past tense. The Idolaters claimed that their deities had commanded them to worship them. However, these deities will deny this statement. They will say that they themselves never associated anyone with God, let alone command people to make them as God's associates.

After this conclusive answer, they will not have any excuse to defend themselves with. It may be kept in mind that the punishment of polytheism referred to in the verses is عَذَابٌ كَبِيْر (great torment). This is because polytheism is called ظُلْمٌ عَظِيْمٌ (great oppression) by the Qur'ān.

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ اِلَّآ اِنَّهُمْ لَيَاْكُلُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشُوْنَ فِي الْاَسْوَاقِ ۭ وَجَعَلْنَا بَعْضَكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ فِتْنَةً ۭ اَتَصْبِرُوْنَ ۚ وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ بَصِيْرًا ﴿٢٠﴾[17]

Though this verse apparently addresses the Prophet (sws), it is evident from its words that it is directed towards the masses. Thus both singular and plural verbs and pronouns are used in this verse.

The verse actually answers the objection cited in verse 7 earlier. None of the referred-to activities is against his status of prophethood. Without any exception, all prior messengers ate food and roamed around in the markets the way common people

16. Here, they have regarded you to be liars in what you would say. So, now you can neither defer the punishment nor help yourselves in any way. And whoever among you will be guilty of oppression, We shall make him taste a great torment.

17. And whichever messengers We sent before you, all ate food and roamed about in markets. And We have made you a trial for one another; so, speak up: "Would you show patience?" And your Lord is observing everything.

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do. This answer of the Qur'ān is very clear. This is because the Arabs not only regarded Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) to be prophets and messengers of God but also took pride to be their progeny and the inheritors of the religion they preached. At the same time, the Arabs never claimed that these two were superhuman. They in fact regarded them to be human beings. In a similar way, the Israelites too never regarded any of their prophets to be superhuman. Thus at another instance, the Qur'ān has also asked these objection-raisers that if they are unaware of the history of propherhood, they should consult the People of the Book – who are well aware of this history – whether these prophets ate food and roamed the markets. Though the Christians since the times of Saint Paul tried their best to convert Jesus (sws) into a superhuman, they cannot deny his and his mother's eating. This is because the Gospels copiously mention their consumption of food. Thus the Qur'ān has presented this fact as evidence to negate their divinity. In verse 75 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, the words used are كَانَا يَاْكُلٰنِ الطَّعَامَ (both of them ate food).

Consider next the words وَجَعَلْنَا بَعْضَكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ فِتْنَةً (and We have made you a trial for one another). In verse 53 of Sūrah al-An'ām, it is similarly said: وَكَذٰلِكَ فَتَنَّا بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لِّيَقُوْلُوْٓا اَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْۢ بَيْنِنَا (We have in this manner tested one through another so that these arrogant say: "Are these people the ones whom God has chosen to show favour among us?") In other words, the poverty of the Muslims has become a trial for the disbelievers. They contended that if the religion they were being invited to was from God, why has it been given to these penniless Muslims? It should have necessarily been given to them. They further reckoned that if God had to make anyone His messenger, He would have chosen a wealthy person of Ṭā'if or Makkah and not someone poor like Muḥammad (sws). In the verse under discussion, it is said that the believers have been made a trial for the disbelievers. Their poverty has become a hindrance in the disbelievers accepting the truth In reality, these deniers should have become grateful servants of God after receiving God's favour. However, this favour has become instrumental in their arrogance. Inebriated by this arrogance, instead of reflecting on and accepting the message the Prophet (sws) is presenting them, they have made him a target of their jeers and accusations. This attitude of theirs in reality is from God a test of his patience.

The words "would you show patience?" are addressed to the believers. As far as the disbelievers are concerned, they have utterly failed in their test of gratitude. The believers should now see if they show perseverance in their trial of facing mockery and animosity from their opponents. Those having a flare of language know that when the purpose is to incorporate the meaning of "to urge and exhort" in a directive, it is mentioned in the form of a piece of information. If a letter of interrogation is added, it further increases this emphasis. This style will be further explained under verse 39 of Sūrah al-Shu'arā' هَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّجْتَمِعُوْنَ (will you all gather?) and some very lucid examples of it can be seen in some previous *sūrahs* too.

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Thus in this verse Muslims are urged that if their opponents have failed their test, they should consign them to their fate and try to courageously pass their own test of the patience they are faced with.

The last part of the verse "and your Lord is observing everything" shows that God is watching over the Prophet (sws). He should fully trust his help. If he shows perseverance, the Almighty will make him reach his destination in spite of all this opposition.

God had ascribed the word "trial" to Himself in this verse. This is a reference to the established practice of God that He has implemented in this world to test His servants. It has been explained at many instances in this exegesis.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ لِقَآءَنَا لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ اَوْ نَرٰى رَبَّنَا ؕ لَقَدِ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَعَتَوْ عُتُوًّا كَبِيْرًا ﴿۲۱﴾ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ لَا بُشْرٰى يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُجْرِمِيْنَ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ حِجْرًا مَّحْجُوْرًا ﴿۲۲﴾[18]

The expression الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ لِقَآءَنَا (those who do not fear coming before Us) used by the Qur'ān refers to those arrogant people who did not have any fear of appearing before God. The ignorance and conceit of this group was far more than other active adversaries. For this reason, they are not mentioned by the attribute of disbelief but one that fully exposes their arrogance. This group demanded that if an angel comes to Muḥammad (sws) as he claimed, then why do not angels come to them or why does not God directly reveal Himself to them? This demand can obviously be made people who are outrageously arrogant and foolish. For this reason, instead of answering this nonsensical demand, the Qur'ān has attacked their arrogance.

One meaning of the expression حِجْرًا مَّحْجُوْرًا is "a strong barrier and divide." In verse 53 of this *sūrah*, this expression occurs in this meaning. Another meaning of this expression is "to seek refuge." In the opinion of Sībawayah (d. 180 AH), when it occurs in this meaning, it is used in precisely this way and its accusative form is governed by a suppressed verb in the very way the expression معاذاللہ is.

وَقَدِمْنَآ اِلٰى مَا عَمِلُوْا مِنْ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنٰهُ هَبَآءً مَّنْثُوْرًا ﴿۲۳﴾[19]

These people obviously were proud of the feats they accomplished in the previous world and thought that these achievements make them worthy of being considered heroes not only in this world, but also in the hereafter they would be given a high

18. And those who do not fear coming before Us, say: "Why were angels not sent down to us, or We could have directly observed God?" They regarded themselves to be very superior in their hearts and showed great arrogance. The day they will see the angels, there shall be no good news for these wrongdoers and they will cry out: "Refuge! Refuge!"

19. And We shall move towards each deed they would have done and render it into scattered dust.

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status because of them. The verse says that all these deeds will be scattered like dust by the Almighty because deeds not done to purely please Him have no value before Him. The style adopted in "and We shall move towards each deed they would have done," shows that God will take the initiative to reject their deeds, whether big or small. This reflects His utter humiliation of their doings.

اَصۡحٰبُ الۡجَنَّةِ يَوۡمَئِذٍ خَيۡرٌ مُّسۡتَقَرًّا وَّاَحۡسَنُ مَقِيۡلًا ﴿۲۴﴾[20]

This is in contrast is the portrayal of the People of Paradise, which the disbelievers looked down upon in the previous world. The word مَقِيۡلًا means a place for siesta. However, in its general usage, it refers to a resting place and a relaxing space. A couplet of Imru' al-Qays[21] reads فَقِلۡ فِی مَقِيلِ نَحۡسُه مُتَغَيِّبِ (relax in a relaxing place that is secure from every bad omen). The words اَحۡسَنُ and مَقِيۡلًا are not meant for comparison here. They refer to something best and grand without any comparison. This style has been explained at other instances.

وَيَوۡمَ تَشَقَّقُ السَّمَآءُ بِالۡغَمَامِ وَنُزِّلَ الۡمَلٰٓئِكَةُ تَنۡزِيۡلًا ﴿۲۵﴾ اَلۡمُلۡكُ يَوۡمَئِذِ ۣالۡحَقُّ لِلرَّحۡمٰنِ ؕ وَكَانَ يَوۡمًا عَلَى الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ عَسِيۡرًا ﴿۲۶﴾[22]

These words are part of the answer given earlier to those who were demanding to see angels.

It may be kept in mind that real authority and sovereignty has always belonged to God. However, a veil has been stretched over it in this world. For this reason, the foolish are under a misconception and they start to call themselves as sovereign. On the Day of Judgement, however, it will become evident to everyone that all power and authority rests with God and none else.

وَيَوۡمَ يَعَضُّ الظَّالِمُ عَلٰى يَدَيۡهِ يَقُوۡلُ يٰلَيۡتَنِى اتَّخَذۡتُ مَعَ الرَّسُوۡلِ سَبِيۡلًا ﴿۲۷﴾ يٰوَيۡلَتٰى لَيۡتَنِىۡ لَمۡ اَتَّخِذۡ فُلَانًا خَلِيۡلًا ﴿۲۸﴾ لَقَدۡ اَضَلَّنِىۡ عَنِ الذِّكۡرِ بَعۡدَ اِذۡ جَآءَنِىۡ ؕ وَكَانَ الشَّيۡطٰنُ لِلۡاِنۡسَانِ خَذُوۡلًا ﴿۲۹﴾[23]

Biting the hand signifies regret and longing. This style is found in other languages as well. The word "unjust" here refers to someone who is unjust to his own self. In

20. On that Day, the dwellers of Paradise shall be in the best abode and in a grand resting place.

21. Al-Zubaydī, *Tāj al-'arūs*, vol. 3, 501.

22. And the day when the sky shall split apart with a cloud and group after group of angels shall be sent down, on that day, true sovereignty shall only belong to the Most Merciful God. And that day shall be very tough for the disbelievers.

23. And the day when he who was unjust to his soul shall longingly bite his hand and say: "Would that I had chosen to be with the messenger. Alas! My misfortune! Would that I had not made so-and-so my friend! It was he who led me astray and diverted me from God's remembrance after it had come to me." And Satan is very unfaithful to human beings.

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other words, it alludes to every person who opposed the messenger.

The preposition عَنْ after اَضَلَّنِیْ shows that the latter encompasses the meaning of withdrawal. Thus an accurate rendering would be "through the deviant and false statements made by him against the messenger and the Book of God, he misguided me and led me astray from the path of the messenger." Reference to these statements can be found in verses 4, 21, 33, 41 and 42.

The expression "after it had come to me" is his confession of his own wretchedness. In the absence of the guidance coming to him, he could have presented an excuse; however, what excuse can he present when the truth has been conclusively conveyed to him.

The word خَذُوْل refers to someone who is insincere and is a traitor.

In my opinion, the verse "and Satan is very unfaithful to human beings" is not part of the statement of those who were regretful, as has been generally understood. It is, in fact, from God as an on the spot reminder: Satan is someone who will deceive and withdraw right at the time he had promised his help. The word "Satan" here is a generic noun and refers to the devils found both among human beings and the jinn. The implication is that in this world these mean and wretched people are companions, leaders and followers of one another, and are helping one another in spreading deviant ideas and subjugating the truth; however, in the Hereafter, they will curse one another. The followers will say that such-and-such a person led them astray and if he had not lured them, they would have been on the straight path. The leaders will tell them that they themselves were wretched enough to follow them and merely made them into what they themselves were.

وَقَالَ الرَّسُوْلُ یٰرَبِّ اِنَّ قَوْمِی اتَّخَذُوْا هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ مَهْجُوْرًا ﴿۳۰﴾[24]

The word "messenger" here refers to Muḥammad (sws). The implication is that on the one hand, those who have rejected the Qur'ān will regret their attitude, and on the other, Muḥammad (sws) will also register his complaint before God: "Lord! I presented this Book with full earnestness and sincerity before my people but they did not value it and totally rejected it." This grievance of the Prophet (sws) would be the last nail in the coffin of these wretched people. After this, nothing will be left to express from the tongue. It is has been mentioned in detail in Sūrah al-Mā'idah that on the Day of Judgement, every messenger will bear witness about their respective nations.

وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِیٍّ عَدُوًّا مِّنَ الْمُجْرِمِیْنَ ؕ وَكَفٰی بِرَبِّكَ هَادِیًا وَّنَصِیْرًا ﴿۳۱﴾[25]

The Prophet (sws) is sounded an assurance that if these wretched and callous people

24. And the messenger will say: "My Lord! The people of my nation totally ignored this Qur'ān."

25. And in this way, We have made enemies from the wrongdoers for every prophet, and your Lord is sufficient for guidance and help.

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are opposing him, then this is nothing new in the history of the prophets. The wrongdoers of every age have opposed their messengers in this way. The word مُجْرِمِيْنَ (wrongdoers) occurs in verse 24 earlier too. It refers to the leaders who led people astray and whose attitude is under discussion in this *sūrah*. It is stated that it is these criminals who are responsible for the evils in the land. A messenger wants to reform them but since they have vested interests in all these evils, they do not easily tolerate his invitation towards the truth. They want to curb his preaching by hook or by crook. However, Prophet Muḥammad (sws) should rest assured as his Lord is sufficient to help and guide him in every hardship.

Since this situation is in accordance with the established practice of God – because God has given evil the respite to make hey – He has ascribed it to Himself. This established practice of God is referred to at many instances in this exegesis. In verse 113 of Sūrah al-An'ām, this subject has been mentioned in detail. It can be looked up.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْاٰنُ جُمْلَةً وَّاحِدَةً ۚ كَذٰلِكَ ۚ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهٖ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنٰهُ تَرْتِيْلًا ﴿٣٢﴾[26]

This verse cites their fourth objection. They would spread this propaganda against the Qur'ān in the hearts of people that if this Book was from God, why was it not revealed in one go. God does not need to first think and then arrange for its piecemeal revelation. This propaganda was meant to reinforce a previous one according to which there were others who shared the authorship of this Book. The parts they are able to author were taught by them to the Prophet (sws) who then recited out these parts by ascribing them to God.

The implication of the verse is that God could have easily revealed the whole Book in one instalment; however, it would not have been possible for the Prophet (sws) to receive it at once nor could the people have been taught effectively. Neither would he have been able to bear its heavy burden nor could the truth have been conclusively conveyed to people in a proper way. For this reason, God revealed it gradually so that he could bear it and those who want to learn are provided with this opportunity. If a teacher wants, He can recite the whole book before his students in one lesson but then they would not be able to preserve it.

The expression وَرَتَّلْنٰهُ تَرْتِيْلًا means to read and recite in a very thorough way. It is co-ordinated to the verb which is suppressed after كَذٰلِكَ.This expression signifies God's favour and affection in revealing the Book in such a gradual and thorough way. It was not just handed over to them; it was revealed as lessons in part. The implication is that the piecemeal revelation of the Qur'ān should be a reason of expressing gratitude and not raising objections.

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26. And these disbelievers said: "Why was this Qur'ān not revealed to him in a single instalment?" Thus have We done this so that We can strengthen your heart through this and We have revealed it gradually

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It should be kept in mind that none of the divine scriptures was revealed in one go. Those who hold this view are not aware of these scriptures. The Torah too was not revealed at once. Only the ten commandments were revealed in one instalment. They were given to Moses (sws) written on tablets. Obviously, the Torah is not just composed of the ten commandments. It has all the directives and laws of the Mosaic *sharī'ah* that were revealed gradually during the life time of Moses (sws). Both the Qur'ān and the Torah specify that many of them were revealed before his migration and many in the desert of Sinai after the river was crossed. In a similar way, the Gospel is composed of the sagacious sermons of Jesus (sws) which were revealed to him at various instances according to the needs that arose. It is through them that he then warned his nation. The Psalms were also similarly revealed. It consists of the hymns and counsels of David (sws) revealed to him on various occasions. Thus it is totally wrong to believe that any of these scriptures was revealed in one episode between two covers. And how can this be possible as well! Prophets of God are not authors who spend their lives writing books and handing them over in one go to their people. They were preachers, teachers and moral mentors. They had to cure an ailing nation and purify their beliefs and deeds. It was a natural requirement of their obligation that they gradually reform them and for this receive guidance from God accordingly. As far as I know, none of the scholars of the People of the Book has ever claimed if any of their books was revealed at once. And if anyone of them holds this view, then this claim is against what is mentioned in these books.

The opinion of our exegetes who say that the Torah, Psalms and the Gospel were revealed in one go is thus not correct too.

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وَلَا يَأْتُوْنَكَ بِمَثَلٍ اِلَّا جِئْنٰكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَاَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيْرًا ﴿۳۳﴾[27]

While explaining verse 9, it has been pointed out that the expression ضرب المثل also means "objection." Occasion shows that here it is used in this meaning. Since the word الْحَقّ used in parallel to it, the implication is that the objection referred to is baseless.

After answering all the objections in an effective manner, the Prophet (sws) is sounded assurance here. The need for this assurance was because it was at God's behest that he preached about his prophethood and invited people to the Qur'ān. It was not done out of his own desire. The whole nation had become him enemy because of his claim to prophethood and the message he was presenting. It had started to raise a barrage of objections from all sides. How could he alone have silenced his opponents unless God took the responsibility of defending him upon Himself.

27. And whatever objection these people will raise, We shall let you know its correct answer and best interpretation.

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اَلَّذِيْنَ يُحْشَرُوْنَ عَلٰى وُجُوْهِهِمْ اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَّاَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٣٤﴾[28]

The preposition عَلٰى after يُحْشَرُوْنَ shows that the latter verb encompasses the meaning of يُسْحَبُوْنَ. Thus in verse 48 of Sūrah al-Qamar, the words are: يَوْمَ يُسْحَبُوْنَ فِي النَّارِ عَلٰى وُجُوْهِهِمْ (the Day when they shall be dragged face-downwards in Hell.

This whole verse occurs in contrast with verse 24. The dwellers of Paradise are given glad tidings of a goodly fate in it, while in the verse under discussion the fate of the dwellers of Hell is referred to.

The expression اَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا alludes to the fact that in this world those who have gone astray have no idea of the destination they will reach in this state. For this reason, they are not able to judge where the path they are treading will lead them to. When the destination of Hell will come before them in the hereafter, then they will realize the beginning and end of their journey!

Section III: Verses (35-44)

In these verses, the anecdotes of Moses (sws) and Noah (sws) and nations in between them to which messengers were sent are briefly referred to. The purpose is to assure the Prophet (sws) and warn his nation that God sent His teachings to these nations as well. However, instead of valuing them, they started making fun of those who were delivering these teachings. The consequence of this attitude was that ultimately they met a horrible fate. This *sūrah* only briefly refers to these events. The next one, which is its counterpart, mentions these events in detail. Their sequence of mention is both ascending and descending. First, Moses (sws) is mentioned who was the most prominent prophet and messenger of the Israelites who was given a Book and God's *sharī'ah*. After that Noah (sws) is mentioned from whom a series of prophets came after Abraham (sws). This is an ascending order sequence. In between other nations are mentioned in a descending order sequence.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ وَجَعَلْنَا مَعَهٗٓ اَخَاهُ هٰرُوْنَ وَزِيْرًا ﴿٣٥﴾ فَقُلْنَا اذْهَبَآ اِلَى الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا
بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۭ فَدَمَّرْنٰهُمْ تَدْمِيْرًا ﴿٣٦﴾ وَقَوْمَ نُوْحٍ لَّمَّا كَذَّبُوا الرُّسُلَ اَغْرَقْنٰهُمْ وَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ لِلنَّاسِ اٰيَةً ۭ وَاَعْتَدْنَا
لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿٣٧﴾ وَّعَادًا وَّثَمُوْدَا۟ وَاَصْحٰبَ الرَّسِّ وَقُرُوْنًۢا بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ كَثِيْرًا ﴿٣٨﴾ وَكُلًّا ضَرَبْنَا لَهُ
الْاَمْثَالَ ۡ وَكُلًّا تَبَّرْنَا تَتْبِيْرًا ﴿٣٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ اَتَوْا عَلَى الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِيْٓ اُمْطِرَتْ مَطَرَ السَّوْءِ ۭ اَفَلَمْ يَكُوْنُوْا يَرَوْنَهَا ۚ

28. Those who will be dragged on their faces towards Hell are the ones who are the worst with regard to their abode and ones who have lost their way the most.

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بَلْ كَانُوْا لَا يَرْجُوْنَ نُشُوْرًا ﴿٤٠﴾ وَاِذَا رَاَوْكَ اِنْ يَّتَّخِذُوْنَكَ اِلَّا هُزُوًا ؕ اَهٰذَا الَّذِيْ بَعَثَ اللّٰهُ رَسُوْلًا ﴿٤١﴾ اِنْ كَادَ
لَيُضِلُّنَا عَنْ اٰلِهَتِنَا لَوْلَاۤ اَنْ صَبَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا ؕ وَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ حِيْنَ يَرَوْنَ الْعَذَابَ مَنْ اَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٤٢﴾
اَرَءَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰهَهٗ هَوٰىهُ ؕ اَفَاَنْتَ تَكُوْنُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿٤٣﴾ اَمْ تَحْسَبُ اَنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ يَسْمَعُوْنَ اَوْ يَعْقِلُوْنَ ؕ
اِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا كَالْاَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ اَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٤٤﴾

We gave the Book to Moses and with it had made his brother Aaron his helper. Thus We directed both of them to go to people who have denied Our revelations. So, We utterly devastated them. And We destroyed the people of Noah too when they denied the messengers. We drowned them and made them an exemplary sign for people. And for such wrongdoers, We have prepared a painful torment as well. And We destroyed the ‘Ād, the Thamūd, the Companions of al-Rass and many nations between them. And for every one of them We explained our teachings of wisdom and ultimately ravaged each of them. And these people have also passed by the settlement on which the rain of destruction was sent down. Have they not been observing it? In fact, they do not expect to be raised up again after death. (35-40)

And whenever they see you, they only make fun of you. Is he the one who God has sent as a messenger? This person would have turned us away from our deities if We had not strongly adhered to them. And soon when they see the torment, they will come to know who has strayed very far from the path. So, this person who has made his desire his god, will you be responsible for him? Do you think that most of them hear or understand? They are like mere animals; in fact, even more misguided. (41-44)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ وَجَعَلْنَا مَعَهٗۤ اَخَاهُ هٰرُوْنَ وَزِيْرًا ﴿٣٥﴾[29]

Aaron (sws) is mentioned many times in the Qur’ān as a helper of Moses (sws). The purpose is to explain an aspect of God’s favour and His conclusive communication of the truth: a messenger was sent to assist another. At another instance, it has been explained that Moses (sws) did not regard himself to be an expressive speaker. Thus he prayed to God to make Aaron his helper so that through his eloquence and power of persuasion he would be able to preach his message with full force and confidence. This would ensure that his obligation of conclusive communication of the truth is effectively fulfilled. Thus God granted his prayer and both were simultaneously sent to preach the Pharaoh and his nation. However, they did not value this favour and blessing of God.

29. We gave the Book to Moses and with it had made his brother Aaron his helper.

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فَقُلْنَا اذْهَبَآ اِلَى الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۭ فَدَمَّرْنٰهُمْ تَدْمِيْرًا ۝[30]

Since the purpose is a brief mention, the whole anecdote is referred to in two sentences: the Almighty sent both these messengers with His signs to these people but they rejected them by regarding them to be magic. They were utterly routed as a result. These words assure the Prophet (sws) that those whose hearts are perverted never accept guidance. So much so, they deny two messengers and all their miracles. At the same time, the Quraysh are warned that if they too follow the footsteps of the Pharaoh and his people, there is not reason that they too meet a different fate.

وَقَوْمَ نُوْحٍ لَّمَّا كَذَّبُوا الرُّسُلَ اَغْرَقْنٰهُمْ وَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ لِلنَّاسِ اٰيَةً ۭ وَاَعْتَدْنَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۝[31]

The nation of Noah (sws) denied only one messenger, yet the plural "messengers" is used here. The reason for this has already been explained under verse 59 of Sūrah Hūd: since all the messengers present the same message and since the one who sent them is also the same, the rejection of one is tantamount to the rejection of all. This style is meant to direct the attention of people to the fact that those who deny a messenger should contemplate where this denial actually takes them to. Examples of this style will be seen in the succeeding *sūrah* too.

The words "and made them an exemplary sign for people" point to the horrible fate of people who deny their messenger.

The words "and for such wrongdoers, We have prepared a painful torment as well" refer to the fact that God does not merely punish such wrongdoers in this world; in the hereafter too, He punishes them in a very painful way.

وَّعَادًا وَّثَمُوْدَا۟ وَاَصْحٰبَ الرَّسِّ وَقُرُوْنًۢا بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ كَثِيْرًا ۝[32]

Here the verb اَهْلَكْنَا is suppressed due to concomitant indications. I regret that I have not been successful until now about the identity of اَصْحٰبَ الرَّسِّ. Ibn Jarīr[33] has cited several names but he himself is not satisfied about either of them. He has stated that nothing can be said with certainty about any of them.

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30. Thus We directed both of them to go to people who have denied Our revelations. So, We utterly devastated them.

31. And We destroyed the people of Noah too when they denied the messengers. We drowned them and made them an exemplary sign for people. And for such wrongdoers, We have prepared a painful torment as well.

32. And We destroyed the 'Ād, the Thamūd, the Companions of al-Rass and many nations between them.

33. Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, vol. 19 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1405 AH), 13-15.

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Zamakhsharī[34] has mentioned more names besides referring to the nation of Shu'ayb (sws). In fact, he has presented the latter as his first preference. However, this opinion is not correct in any respect. This is because in Sūrah Qāf (50:12) both the *aṣḥāb al-rass* and the *aṣḥāb al-aykah* are mentioned separately. The Qur'ān itself has specified that the *aṣḥāb al-aykah* refer to nation of Shu'ayb (sws), as is also mentioned in the next *sūrah*. If the *aṣḥāb al-rass* referred to them, then there was no need to mention them in this way in Sūrah Qāf

Sayyid Sulaymān Nadvī (d. 1953) opines that the *aṣḥāb al-rass* refer to the Qaydamā tribe from among the twelve tribes of the Ishmaelites. At the same time, he has also confessed that nothing is known about them with certainty. Notwithstanding this obscurity, no messenger is known to have come to the Ishmaelites except Muḥammad (sws). Here the context in which the *aṣḥāb al-rass* are mentioned shows a messenger was sent to them and they rejected him like the nations of the 'Ād and the Thamūd.

Thus it is very difficult to say anything about them with certainty. The only thing that can be said is that they were an ancient nation of Arabia to which God sent a messenger. However, they denied him and became worthy of punishment in accordance with the established practice of God. Among the classical poets Zuhayr (d. 609 AD) has mentioned the valley of Rass thus:

فهن لوادی الرس کالید للفم[35]

(And they and the valley of Rass was like the mouth to the hand)

Consider now the last part of the verse "and many nations between them." The Qur'ān has specified at various instances that it has not mentioned all prophets and messengers. Those not mentioned are known to God only. Those who want to find out details of events and happenings know the limitations of history. It not only has a limited scope, it is also interspersed with raw and inauthentic data. It is the Creator of this world Who knows the most about its events and circumstances. Thus instead of books of history, His book must be trusted the most. If the Qur'ān mentions a historical anecdote, it is a blessed addition to our knowledge. If history corroborates it, well and good; otherwise, it shall be regarded as a limitation of this discipline of knowledge.

وَكُلًّا ضَرَبْنَا لَهُ الْاَمْثَالَ ۘ وَكُلًّا تَبَّرْنَا تَتْبِيْرًا ﴿۳۹﴾[36]

The expression ضرب المثل here connotes explaining something with all its details and

34. Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Zamakasharī, *Al-Kashshāf 'an ḥaqā'iq al-tanzīl wa 'uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta'wīl*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār iḥyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, n.d.), 285-286

35. Al-Zubaydī, *Tāj al-'arūs*, vol. 5, 570.

36. And for every one of them We explained our teachings of wisdom and ultimately ravaged each of them.

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with all consequences of warning. When it is needed that people should become fully aware of something including its consequences, the most effective way to do is to use examples that portray facts and employ historical anecdotes. Since messengers of God are sent to conclusively convey the truth to their respective nations, they have not merely confined themselves in putting forth principles. They have also fully explained them through examples and through historical accounts. Thus a reader can observe that in the Qur'ān every fact has been explained through examples and events to such an extent that the most stubborn of people cannot deny them. The same methodology was adopted by the messengers. There were some nations who did not understand even after this since they were not ones who use their intellect to comprehend things; they want to observe things by their eyes in order to believe in them. About such people, it has been explained at a number of instances in this exegesis that as per the established practice of God, they are destroyed by the very punishment they deny and demand to see by their eyes. The verse thus states that God made all nations fully understand, but when they refused to do so, they were totally routed. The implication is that the Prophet (sws) should know that the same fate awaits his people if they do not duly value the Qur'ān.

وَلَقَدْ اَتَوْا عَلَى الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِيْٓ اُمْطِرَتْ مَطَرَ السَّوْءِ ؕ اَفَلَمْ يَكُوْنُوْا يَرَوْنَهَا ۚ بَلْ كَانُوْا لَا يَرْجُوْنَ نُشُوْرًا ﴿۴۰﴾[37]

This is an allusion to the settlements of Lot's (sws) people. The nature of punishment that visited them has been explained in this exegesis at a relevant instance. For details the exegesis of Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt can be looked up in *Majmū'ah tafāsīr-i Farāhī*.[38]

By referring to the Quraysh, it is said that the anecdotes of other nations may be unknown to them. However, can they claim oblivion to the settlements of a nation that was visited by God's horrible scourge? Their trade caravans pass through routes where the ruins of this nation lie. Since they have no fear of being created again, they pose to be blind about them. It may be kept in mind that the trade caravans of the Quraysh used to pass by the ruined remains of the nation of Lot (sws).

It thus becomes evident from this verse that a person is blessed with insight if he believes in the hereafter. In the absence of this belief he may have a normal eyesight but will not have insight.

وَاِذَا رَاَوْكَ اِنْ يَّتَّخِذُوْنَكَ اِلَّا هُزُوًا ؕ اَهٰذَا الَّذِيْ بَعَثَ اللّٰهُ رَسُوْلًا ﴿۴۱﴾ اِنْ كَادَ لَيُضِلُّنَا عَنْ اٰلِهَتِنَا لَوْلَآ اَنْ صَبَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا ؕ

37. And these people have also passed by the settlement on which the rain of destruction was sent down. Have they not been observing it? In fact, they do not expect to be raised up again after death.

38. Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, *Majmū'ah tafāsīr-i Farāhī*, (trans. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī), 1st ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1998), 129-131.

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وَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ حِيْنَ يَرَوْنَ الْعَذَابَ مَنْ اَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا ﴿۴۲﴾[39]

The implication of this verse is that God had shown His favour to them by explaining to them the reality of this world and the next through the Prophet (sws) and the Qur'ān. However, such is there wretchedness that they utter these words. Today they are proudly adhering to their foolishness but tomorrow when they will be faced with the torment as a result of their attitude, they will get to know that the Prophet (sws) did not lead them astray. He actually wanted to lead them to the straight path. They have reached this fate because of not adopting this path.

What is indicated in مَنْ اَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا has been explained earlier in verse 34: the deviant do not have an idea of their deviance unless they see their fate. They are slaves to their desires. These desires blind them to such an extent that no reminder is effective for them.

اَرَءَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰهَهٗ هَوٰىهُ ؕ اَفَاَنْتَ تَكُوْنُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿۴۳﴾ اَمْ تَحْسَبُ اَنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ يَسْمَعُوْنَ اَوْ يَعْقِلُوْنَ ؕ اِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا كَالْاَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ اَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا ﴿۴۴﴾[40]

The اَرَءَيْتَ style of address has been discussed at an appropriate instance.

These verses sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws). It is a person's intellect that guides him and not his desire. None can guide people who forsake their intellect and become slaves of their desire. It has been explained at another place that all desires are blind. These desires only want their demands to be fulfilled. They are not concerned with good or evil. A person who follows them and that too in a way that they become his god gets entangled in the web weaved by Satan to such an extent that it become impossible for him to escape from it.

The words "Do you think that most of them hear or understand?" address the Prophet (sws) who was expending all his efforts to reform these people. The implication is that does the Prophet (sws) expect that they still have the ability of understanding left in them. If this is so, then this is not correct. They have wasted away this faculty and now have become animals; in fact, even worse.

It may be noted that this is not an expression of exaggeration by the Qur'ān. It reflects the precise truth. Animals follow their instincts on which God has created them and do not deviate from them the slightest. However, when a human being

39. And whenever they see you, they only make fun of you. Is he the one who God has sent as a messenger? This person would have turned us away from our deities if We had not strongly adhered to them. And soon when they see the torment, they will come to know who has strayed very far from the path.

40. So, this person who has made his desire his god, will you be responsible for him? Do you think that most of them hear or understand? They are like mere animals; in fact, even more misguided.

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becomes a slave of his desires, he crosses all limits of his instincts and nature and becomes worse than an animal.

Section IV: Verses (45-62)

In the previous verses, the Prophet (sws) has been assured in the light of historical anecdotes. In the succeeding verses, attention is directed to signs found in the physical world around human beings. These arguments reinforce what is stated in the historical anecdotes. By pointing towards these signs, the Prophet (sws) is told that the arguments he needs to fulfil his obligation of preaching are mentioned in the Qur'ān in various styles. He is then urged to try to convey the truth to these people in a conclusive way through this Book and not care about the objections and demands they raise every now and them. They do this to merely harass him or to strengthen their own reputation.

Readers may proceed to study the verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ كَيْفَ مَدَّ الظِّلَّ ۚ وَلَوْ شَآءَ لَجَعَلَهٗ سَاكِنًا ۚ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا الشَّمْسَ عَلَيْهِ دَلِيْلًا ﴿٤٥﴾ ثُمَّ قَبَضْنٰهُ
اِلَيْنَا قَبْضًا يَّسِيْرًا ﴿٤٦﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا وَّالنَّوْمَ سُبَاتًا وَّجَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نُشُوْرًا ﴿٤٧﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْٓ
اَرْسَلَ الرِّيٰحَ بُشْرًا ۢ بَيْنَ يَدَىْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ۚ وَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً طَهُوْرًا ﴿٤٨﴾ لِّنُحْيِۦَ بِهٖ بَلْدَةً مَّيْتًا وَّنُسْقِيَهٗ مِمَّا
خَلَقْنَآ اَنْعَامًا وَّاَنَاسِىَّ كَثِيْرًا ﴿٤٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنٰهُ بَيْنَهُمْ لِيَذَّكَّرُوْا ۖ فَاَبٰٓى اَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ اِلَّا كُفُوْرًا ﴿٥٠﴾ وَلَوْ شِئْنَا
لَبَعَثْنَا فِىْ كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ نَّذِيْرًا ﴿٥١﴾ فَلَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَجَاهِدْهُمْ بِهٖ جِهَادًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٥٢﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ هٰذَا
عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ وَّهٰذَا مِلْحٌ اُجَاجٌ ۚ وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخًا وَّحِجْرًا مَّحْجُوْرًا ﴿٥٣﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَآءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهٗ
نَسَبًا وَّصِهْرًا ۗ وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ قَدِيْرًا ﴿٥٤﴾ وَيَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَلَا يَضُرُّهُمْ ۗ وَكَانَ الْكَافِرُ عَلٰى رَبِّهٖ
ظَهِيْرًا ﴿٥٥﴾ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ اِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ﴿٥٦﴾ قُلْ مَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ اِلَّا مَنْ شَآءَ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذَ اِلٰى رَبِّهٖ
سَبِيْلًا ﴿٥٧﴾ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْحَىِّ الَّذِىْ لَا يَمُوْتُ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِهٖ ۗ وَكَفٰى بِهٖ بِذُنُوْبِ عِبَادِهٖ خَبِيْرًا ﴿٥٨﴾ ۨ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِىْ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۛ اَلرَّحْمٰنُ فَسْـَٔلْ بِهٖ خَبِيْرًا ﴿٥٩﴾ وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمُ
اسْجُدُوْا لِلرَّحْمٰنِ قَالُوْا وَمَا الرَّحْمٰنُ ۗ اَنَسْجُدُ لِمَا تَاْمُرُنَا وَزَادَهُمْ نُفُوْرًا ﴿٦٠﴾ تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ فِى السَّمَآءِ بُرُوْجًا وَّ
جَعَلَ فِيْهَا سِرٰجًا وَّقَمَرًا مُّنِيْرًا ﴿٦١﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ خِلْفَةً لِّمَنْ اَرَادَ اَنْ يَّذَّكَّرَ اَوْ اَرَادَ شُكُوْرًا ﴿٦٢﴾

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Do you not observe this power of your Lord that how He spreads the shadow? Had He wanted, He would have made it stay in this way. Then We make the sun a guide over it. Then We gradually draw it to Our self. (45-46)

And it is He Who has made the night a covering for you and sleep a means of comfort and the day a time to rise. (47)

And it is He Who before His rain of mercy sends winds as glad tidings. And We send down pure water from the sky to revive the dead land and to make many animals and human beings from among Our creatures drink it. (48-49)

And We have explained this among them in various styles so that they may pay heed but most people are adamant on ingratitude. And if We wanted, We could have also sent a warner in each settlement. So, pay no heed to what these ingrates say, and through it wage full *jihād* against them. (50-52)

And it is He Who has joined together two seas. The water of one is sweet and tasty and the other very salty and bitter. And He has set up a barrier and a strong obstruction between the two. (53)

And it is He Who created human beings from water and then joined them through relations of blood and of marriage. And your Lord is very powerful. (54)

And leaving aside God, they worship things which can neither benefit nor harm them and these disbelievers have become rivals of their Lord. And We have made you only as a bearer of glad tidings and deliverer of warnings. Say: I am not asking any reward from you for this except this that whoever wishes should adopt the way leading to his Lord. And trust your living God Who shall never die and keep glorifying Him while being grateful to Him. And He is sufficient to remain aware of the sins of His servants. Who created the heavens and the earth and all the things between them in six phases; then He ascended His throne. He is the Most Merciful. So, ask of His majesty the one who knows. And when they are asked to prostrate before the Most Merciful God, they say: "What is the Most Merciful? Should we prostrate before a thing you order us to?" And this thing further increases their hate. (55-60)

Very blessed is the being who made forts in the sky and made a shining lamp and a glittering moon in it and it is He Who made the night and day follow one another for those who want to be reminded or be grateful. (61-62)

Explanation

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ كَيْفَ مَدَّ الظِّلَّ ۚ وَلَوْ شَآءَ لَجَعَلَهٗ سَاكِنًا ۚ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا الشَّمْسَ عَلَيْهِ دَلِيْلًا ۝۴۵ ثُمَّ قَبَضْنٰهُ اِلَيْنَا قَبْضًا يَّسِيْرًا ۝۴۶[41]

The words اَلَمْ تَرَ address every person individually and refer to the shadow of the night which the Almighty spreads over the whole world. If He makes it permanently

41. Do you not observe this power of your Lord that how He spreads the shadow? Had He wanted, He would have made it stay in this way. Then We make the sun a guide over it. Then We gradually draw it to Our self.

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stay in this way, no one has the power to undo it. It is God's majesty and power that He spreads it every night and draws it away every day. Both this spreading and drawing away are essential to maintain life in this world. None except the one and only God has the power over both these tasks. It is He Who sends His sun everyday to gradually diminish the darkness. In Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, the words used are:

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمُ الَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَنْ اِلٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ يَاْتِيْكُمْ بِضِيَآءٍ ؕ اَفَلَا تَسْمَعُوْنَ. قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَرْمَدًا اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَنْ اِلٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ يَاْتِيْكُمْ بِلَيْلٍ تَسْكُنُوْنَ فِيْهِ ؕ اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ. وَمِنْ رَّحْمَتِهٖ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوْا فِيْهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ. (٢٨: ٧١-٧٣)

Tell them: "Speak up, if God makes the night prevail on you until the hereafter, then which deity except God can bring light to you? Do you not listen?!" Say: "Speak up, if God makes the day prevail on you until the hereafter, then which deity except God can bring the night to you in which you feel comfort? Do you not see!?" And out of His mercy He has created the night and day for you so that you may find comfort in it and that you may seek His bounty and that you may be grateful only to Him. (28:71-73)

Just as a guide makes something evident, in this way the sun becomes guide in the darkness of night. It does away with it. If it does not bring light, everyone would be left wandering about and not find the way of the unfathomable darkness that has engulfed them.

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا وَّالنَّوْمَ سُبَاتًا وَّجَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نُشُوْرًا ﴿٤٧﴾[42]

This verses points to the signs of the day and night in another way. This rising in the day reminds people that just as they awake in the morning after the night's sleep, they will also one day awake from the sleep of death on the Day of Judgement. The word نُشُوْر here very eloquently points to life after death. The implication is that if a person has eyes that can really see and a heart and mind that can think, he will observe many signs of God's providence, mercy, power, wisdom as well as of monotheism and the hereafter in the alternating of the night and day and in the benefits associated with them. All these signs are sufficient to prove every statement of the Qur'ān. However, these signs will benefit only those who contemplate and have the intention to learn a lesson. Those devoid of this intention shut their eyes to these signs and demand new ones. This is topic is brought up again in verses 82-87 ahead where some more of its

42. And it is He Who has made the night a covering for you and sleep a means of comfort and the day a time to rise.

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aspects will be highlighted.

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَرْسَلَ الرِّيٰحَ بُشْرًۢا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ۚ وَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاۗءِ مَاۗءً طَهُوْرًا ﴿٤٨﴾ لِّنُحْيِۦَ بِهٖ بَلْدَةً مَّيْتًا وَّنُسْقِيَهٗ مِمَّا خَلَقْنَآ اَنْعَامًا وَّاَنَاسِيَّ كَثِيْرًا ﴿٤٩﴾[43]

The word رَحْمَةٌ connotes rain here, and it has been used in this connotation at a number of instances in the Qur'ān. After directing attention to the attributes of God that can be observed in the alternation of day and night, attention is now directed to the merciful nature of the rain. Though this rain does not descend everyday, yet every living being of this earth is dependent on it for survival. Once it comes, it depicts all the attributes and majesties of God, on which the message of the Qur'ān is based.

The implication is that people should think: Has this world – in every nook and corner of which are so many manifestations of wisdom and power – come into being without a creator? Is all this the result of a blind first cause? Has this correspondence and connection between the heavens, the earth, the clouds, the winds and the rain and between what is needed by human beings and animals come into existence of its own accord? Can it be imagined after observing the harmony between diverse elements of nature that conflicting intentions control it? Does not this elaborate arrangement of mercy and providence from the most gracious and ever merciful Lord impose any responsibility on human beings? Does not every shower of rain remind us of this fact of life that the wise and powerful being Who is making us continuously observe His wisdom and power will have not the slightest difficulty in raising people back to life once they die and become clay?

The adjective "many" qualifies animals and human beings. The purpose of this is to point to the fact that there are creatures of God who do not require water for their sustenance; however, there are many who do require water. Animals and human beings are specially mentioned here which are prominent and superior creatures of land. By mentioning them, other creatures are automatically subsumed under them.

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنٰهُ بَيْنَهُمْ لِيَذَّكَّرُوْا ۡ فَاَبٰٓى اَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ اِلَّا كُفُوْرًا ﴿٥٠﴾ وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَبَعَثْنَا فِيْ كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ نَّذِيْرًا ﴿٥١﴾ فَلَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَجَاهِدْهُمْ بِهٖ جِهَادًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٥٢﴾[44]

Concomitant indications show that the antecedent of the accusative pronoun in صَرَّفْنٰهُ

43. And it is He Who before His rain of mercy sends winds as glad tidings. And We send down pure water from the sky to revive the dead land and to make many animals and human beings from among Our creatures drink it.

44. And We have explained this among them in various styles so that they may pay heed but most people are adamant on ingratitude. And if We wanted, We could have also sent a warner in each settlement. So, pay no heed to what these ingrates say, and through it wage full *jihād* against them.

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is the Qur'ān because the earlier arguments have been cited to support its message. This verse actually addresses the Prophet (sws) in between the mention of the signs: as far as proof and arguments are concerned, the Almighty has explained them in the Qur'ān in various styles but their majority instead of valuing them is adamant on their rejection; thus it is neither his fault nor are the teachings of the Qur'ān lacking in any way; it is these people who are entirely at fault.

The word تَصْرِيْفٌ refers to the fact that the Qur'ān has explained every fact and reality in so many different ways and a variety styles that only the obdurate and stubborn can deny them. Moreover, the word بَيْنَهُمْ shows that the truth has been conclusively conveyed to every section and group of the addressees and not confined to any particular ones among them.

The verse وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَبَعَثْنَا فِيْ كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ نَّذِيْرًا alludes to the fact that had the Almighty seen that the task of preaching was falling short because the Prophet (sws) was alone in this task, He would have sent a warner in every settlement; this would not have been the slightest difficult for Him; however, it is not that the Prophet's endeavours are lacking in any way; it is these people who are at fault who have shut their eyes and abandoned their faculty of intellect.

The implication of the verse فَلَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَجَاهِدْهُمْ بِهٖ جِهَادًا كَبِيْرًا is that these people are making new demands every now and then from the Prophet (sws) only to tease and pester him; he should disregard them and continued to wage *jihād* against them through this weapon of the Qur'ān. The expression جِهَادًا كَبِيْرًا points to the fact that no doubt his *jihād* is very exacting and if a torment is sent to them because of their demands they will be wiped out in the blink of any eye; however, it is God's wisdom that instead of a torment visiting them, the Prophet (sws) wage *jihād* through this Qur'ān. As a result, the truth will be conclusively communicated to them and those who have any ability to accept it are provided with this opportunity and no one is left with any excuse before God.

The word اِطَاعَةٌ here implies "to listen to someone and giving regard to him."

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ هٰذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ وَّهٰذَا مِلْحٌ اُجَاجٌ ۚ وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخًا وَّحِجْرًا مَّحْجُوْرًا ﴿۵۳﴾[45]

The word مَرَجَ means "to leave," and عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ means "very sweet and tasty."

The expression حِجْرًا مَّحْجُوْرًا has already been explained under verse 22 earlier. Here it refers to a strong obstruction and a robust barrier. Construction-wise it is the same as expressions as ظِلًّا ظَلِيْلًا (٥٧:٤).

After the discourse had shifted to address the Prophet (sws), now in this verse it once again shifts back to recount a great sign of God's power and wisdom found in

45. And it is He Who has joined together two seas. The water of one is sweet and tasty and the other very salty and bitter. And He has set up a barrier and a strong obstruction between the two.

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the world around human beings. The fact that an invisible barrier separates two opposing types of water shows all opposing elements of nature are under the control of a supreme and powerful being. They dare not cross the limits set for them by the Almighty. It is He Who lets loose any of them and it is He who holds back any of them.

It may be kept in mind the most powerful factor in polytheistic nations drifting away from the truth was the existence of opposing elements. They considered this world to be a battlefield of opposing forces and regarded each of these opposing elements a deity and started to worship it. The Qur'ān has tried to dispel this misunderstanding in various styles, as has been explained at various instances in this exegesis. Here too, this fact is highlighted in a new way: these opposing forces are not independent and authoritative; they are in fact under the control of an all powerful being. Thus at another instance the words are: [46] مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيٰنِ. بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَّا يَبْغِيٰنِ. (۵۵: ۱۹-۲۰)

وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَآءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهٗ نَسَبًا وَّصِهْرًا ؕ وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ قَدِیْرًا ﴿۵۴﴾ [47]

The meaning of نَسَب is evident; صِهْر refers to in-laws. The implication is that God created human beings from water and mates too from this water. They were given such natural instincts that on the one hand blood relations were created by him and on the other relations out of marriage. In this way, they became creators of families and societies for which the wise and powerful Creators had actually brought them into existence. The sentence وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ قَدِیْرًا refers to the fact that only God has the power to create opposites from water and then knit them into a single thread through His power and wisdom. This fact is a clear testimony to the fact that the intention of a single wise and powerful being controls the whole universe. It is He Who creates opposing elements from the same substance and then engenders harmony and affiliation among them through His ultimate wisdom.

It may be kept in mind that the earlier arguments were drawn from the world around human beings, while this one has been drawn from within them.

وَیَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا یَنْفَعُهُمْ وَلَا یَضُرُّهُمْ ؕ وَكَانَ الْكَافِرُ عَلٰی رَبِّهٖ ظَهِیْرًا ﴿۵۵﴾ [48]

The signs found around human beings and those within them point to the fact that this universe has a single master and creator who is peerless and Who is governing its

46. Between them is a barrier which they cannot cross. So, which of your Lord's miracles would you deny? (55:19-20)

47. And it is He Who created human beings from water and then joined them through relations of blood and of marriage. And your Lord is very powerful.

48. And leaving aside God, they worship things which can neither benefit nor harm them and these disbelievers have become rivals of their Lord.

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system with all His power and wisdom. Yet these foolish people are worshipping things that can neither benefit nor harm them.

The word كَافِرُ is used as a generic noun and refers to the polytheists that were mentioned in the previous verses. This is because polytheism is in fact disbelief. The word ظَهِيْر means "helper," and when it is used with the preposition عَلٰى, the meaning of rival is incorporated in it. The implication is that what is the actual reality has been stated earlier; yet these disbelievers have become helpers of Satan against God and His rivals. They are opposing with their full might the call of the messenger to worship the one and only God.

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ اِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ﴿٥٦﴾[49]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws): his responsibility is only to deliver warnings and glad tidings; he should fulfil this responsibility and fully inform them of the consequences of denial; after that, it is their responsibility to accept or reject; he will not be held accountable for this.

قُلْ مَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ اِلَّا مَنْ شَآءَ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذَ اِلٰى رَبِّهٖ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٥٧﴾[50]

If people adopt the path referred to in this verse, it is they alone who will benefit; otherwise, they alone will bear its consequences. In either case, no harm will come to the Prophet (sws). In Sūrah Sabā, this topic is brought up thus: مَا سَاَلْتُكُمْ مِّنْ اَجْرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُمْ ۭ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلَي اللّٰهِ. (٣٤:٤٧)[51]

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِيْ لَا يَمُوْتُ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِهٖ ۭ وَكَفٰى بِهٖ بِذُنُوْبِ عِبَادِهٖ خَبِيْرَۨا ﴿٥٨﴾[52]

The implication of the verse is that those who trust God are never deprived of His blessings. There also exists a subtle sarcasm in it on the dead deities of the idolaters about which it is said that they can neither give benefit nor inflict harm.

The words "keep glorifying Him while being grateful to Him" point to the means of attaining patience and trust. Wherever in the Qur'ān the Prophet (sws) has been urged to show patience and exercise trust, he has been directed to glorify God while being grateful to Him and to be diligent in the prayer.

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49. And We have made you only as a bearer of glad tidings and deliverer of warnings.

50. Say: I am not asking any reward from you for this except this that whoever wishes should adopt the way leading to his Lord.

51. Say: "If I have asked for any reward from you, it is for you only. My reward rests with God alone."

52. And trust your living God Who shall never die and keep glorifying Him while being grateful to Him. And He is sufficient to remain aware of the sins of His servants.

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The last part of the verse "And He is sufficient to remain aware of the sins of His servants" implies that the Prophet (sws) should consign the matter of his opponents to God; if He is aware of all their sins, He will treat them accordingly.

الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَیْنَهُمَا فِیْ سِتَّةِ اَیَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰی عَلَی الْعَرْشِ ۛ اَلرَّحْمٰنُ فَسْـَٔلْ بِهٖ خَبِیْرًا ﴿۵۹﴾[53]

More attributes of the immortal God are stated here. As has already been explained under verse 54 of Sūrah al-A'rāf, days here refer to God's days whose length only He knows. For our understanding, we can regard them to be six phases. The purpose of this mention is that this universe has not come into being because of any accidental happening; its creator has, on the contrary, created it in a very elaborate and painstaking way.

The words "then He ascended His throne" point to the fact that after creating this universe in this way God did not become aloof from it as some foolish people contend. Had this been the case, then this creation would have been a meaningless act and it is against the majesty of a wise creator to do such a thing. On the other hand, He is governing the affairs of this universe. If it has evolved, then this was not of its own accord but because of the sagacious planning of its creator, and none except Him has control over the affairs of the universe.

The word اَلرَّحْمٰنُ (the Most Merciful) is an enunciative (*khabar*) whose inchoative (*mubtadā'*) is suppressed. The sentence is to the effect: He Who has created the universe is the Most Merciful. To focus full attention on the enunciative, the inchoative has been suppressed. The attribute اَلرَّحْمٰنُ here specially signifies that the fact that this universe has a purpose; its creator is the Most Merciful and it is out of His mercy that He has created it. The necessary consequence of this attribute is that He brings about a day in which His mercy fully manifests itself with His perfect justice.

The words "so, ask of His majesty the one who knows" address the people already under discussion since the previous verses. The genitive pronoun in فَسْـَٔلْ بِهٖ relates to خَبِیْرًا. The preposition ب comes with سؤال when the latter encompasses the meaning of making fun. Here this cannot be the case. God has referred to His own self here by the word خَبِیْرًا and it occurs in the undefined form to magnify it. The implication is that the actual attributes of God are the one He Himself has stated and not the ones these people are fabricating. If they want to find out His attributes, they should not make wild conjectures; instead, they should consult Him Who knows His attributes the most. Precisely the same thing is stated in verse 14 of Sūrah al-Fātīr thus: وَ یَوْمَ الْقِیٰمَةِ یَكْفُرُوْنَ بِشِرْكِكُمْ ؕ وَ لَا یُنَبِّئُكَ مِثْلُ خَبِیْرٍ.[54] Obviously the word خَبِیْر here refers to God Who was

53. Who created the heavens and the earth and all the things between them in six phases; then He ascended His throne. He is the Most Merciful. So, ask of His majesty the one who knows.

54. And on the Day of Judgement your deities will deny your polytheism. And none can

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informing people of the reality through His book and through His messenger.

وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمُ اسْجُدُوْا لِلرَّحْمٰنِ قَالُوْا وَمَا الرَّحْمٰنُ اَنَسْجُدُ لِمَا تَاْمُرُنَا وَزَادَهُمْ نُفُوْرًا ﴿٦٠﴾[55]

The greatest attribute of the creator of the heavens and the earth is الرَّحْمٰنُ but how unfortunate are these people who behave in this way. Moreover, instead of being happy on receiving His guidance on what is actually required of them and valuing Him with full sincerity, their hate and aversion further increases.

While explaining verse 110 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, it has been elucidated in detail that though the Arabs were not unaware of the attribute of الرَّحْمٰنُ for God and both His names of الرَّحْمٰنُ and اللّٰه were found in their literature, the former name was more common among the People of the Book and the latter among the Idolaters of Arabia. The leaders of the Quraysh used this also as an excuse to incite people against the Qur'ān. It has been mentioned earlier that they worked the propaganda that some People of the Book also share the authorship of the Qur'ān. For this they would refer to the repeated occurrence of the word الرَّحْمٰنُ and contended that these People of the Book wanted to impose their religious concepts on them through the Prophet (sws). In a situation of mistrust, such vilification campaigns are very effective to incite the masses. They inflame both national and religious sentiments. Thus as a result many of these ignorant ended up having a strong aversion against the Most Merciful God. The Qur'ān has warned them on this foolishness in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl and here too: this name of God is a treasure trove of His immense blessings; why are they depriving themselves of these because of this prejudice.

تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ فِي السَّمَآءِ بُرُوْجًا وَّجَعَلَ فِيْهَا سِرٰجًا وَّقَمَرًا مُّنِيْرًا ﴿٦١﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ خِلْفَةً لِّمَنْ اَرَادَ اَنْ يَّذَّكَّرَ اَوْ اَرَادَ شُكُوْرًا ﴿٦٢﴾[56]

After the above verses of address, these verses at the end once again direct attention to the signs found in the world around human beings: as far as signs are concerned, there is no scarcity in them; a new sign is not needed; in fact, the will and intention to benefit from them is needed. Those who lack this will remain blind even after seeing signs of all kinds.

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inform you in the way the one who is informed can.

55. And when they are asked to prostrate before the Most Merciful God, they say: "What is the Most Merciful? Should we prostrate before a thing you order us to?" And this thing further increases their hate.

56. Very blessed is the being who made forts in the sky and made a shining lamp and a glittering moon in it and it is He Who made the night and day follow one another for those who want to be reminded or be grateful.

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Consider the part لِّمَنْ اَرَادَ اَنْ يَّذَّكَّرَ اَوْ اَرَادَ شُكُوْرًا (for those who want to be reminded or be grateful). "Reminder" relates to the intellect and "gratitude" to the heart. In every nook and corner of this universe, the Almighty has scattered signs that keep alive the intellect and the heart of people; however, benefiting from them hinges on their intention, and it is for the trial of intention that God has created them. The ability to exercise one's will and intention is the real status of a human beings. God has not forced people in this matter.

The word بُرُوْجً has been explained under verse 16 of Sūrah al-Ḥijr. It refers to the stations and posts created by God in this universe so that the devils among the jinn and men are not able to traverse beyond a certain distance. God's angels guides these posts and do not let these devils eavesdrop on divine revelation. This arrangement has been made by the Almighty so that none but His chosen angels are able to cross over to the High Realm. They cross over to receive His revelations and communicate them to His prophets and messengers. There is no other means except this to find the news of the unseen world. For this reason, those who claim to have this news – whether they are soothsayers and astrologers or others – all are liars. It may be kept in mind that this arrangement mentioned in the verse begins by the word "blessed." The *sūrah* also begins with precisely this word. This points to the fact that it is the necessary consequence of God being "blessed" that He protect the pure fountain of divine revelation from all types of satanic incursions. This is because the life of the soul and the heart as well as success in the Herein and the Hereafter all depend on this divine fodder. More details will be discussed regarding this aspect in the *sūrahs* of the last chapter.

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Section V: Verses (63-75)

Coming up are the concluding verses of the *sūrah*. In them, the Almighty has enumerated the traits and qualities of His people whose intellect and heart are alive and they are able to benefit from His signs and from the Book revealed by Him. This is a portrayal of those who took the initiative in professing belief in the Qur'ān. From this depiction the inner and outer selves of those people has also become evident who were trying to oppose the Prophet (sws) with all their might.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَ عِبَادُ الرَّحْمٰنِ الَّذِيْنَ يَمْشُوْنَ عَلَى الْاَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَّ اِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجٰهِلُوْنَ قَالُوْا سَلٰمًا ﴿٦٣﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ
يَبِيْتُوْنَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَّ قِيَامًا ﴿٦٤﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا اصْرِفْ عَنَّا عَذَابَ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ اِنَّ عَذَابَهَا كَانَ غَرَامًا ﴿٦٥﴾
اِنَّهَا سَآءَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَّ مُقَامًا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ اِذَآ اَنْفَقُوْا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوْا وَ لَمْ يَقْتُرُوْا وَ كَانَ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ قَوَامًا ﴿٦٧﴾ وَ

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الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَدْعُوْنَ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ وَلَا يَقْتُلُوْنَ النَّفْسَ الَّتِيْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا يَزْنُوْنَ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ
ذٰلِكَ يَلْقَ اَثَامًا ﴿٦٨﴾ يُّضٰعَفْ لَهُ الْعَذَابُ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَيَخْلُدْ فِيْهٖ مُهَانًا ﴿٦٩﴾ اِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَاٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ
عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللّٰهُ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ حَسَنٰتٍ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٧٠﴾ وَمَنْ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا
فَاِنَّهٗ يَتُوْبُ اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَتَابًا ﴿٧١﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ لَا يَشْهَدُوْنَ الزُّوْرَ ۙ وَاِذَا مَرُّوْا بِاللَّغْوِ مَرُّوْا كِرَامًا ﴿٧٢﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ اِذَا
ذُكِّرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَمْ يَخِرُّوْا عَلَيْهَا صُمًّا وَّعُمْيَانًا ﴿٧٣﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ اَزْوَاجِنَا وَ
ذُرِّيّٰتِنَا قُرَّةَ اَعْيُنٍ وَّاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ اِمَامًا ﴿٧٤﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ يُجْزَوْنَ الْغُرْفَةَ بِمَا صَبَرُوْا وَيُلَقَّوْنَ فِيْهَا تَحِيَّةً
وَّسَلٰمًا ﴿٧٥﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۭ حَسُنَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَّمُقَامًا ﴿٧٦﴾ قُلْ مَا يَعْبَؤُا بِكُمْ رَبِّيْ لَوْلَا دُعَاۗؤُكُمْ ۚ فَقَدْ
كَذَّبْتُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَكُوْنُ لِزَامًا ﴿٧٧﴾

And the servants of the Most Merciful God are ones who walk humbly on earth and when people overcome with emotions argue with them, they go away by saying *salām* to them. And who spend the nights while prostrating and standing before their Lord. And who pray: "Our Lord! Ward off from us the torment of Hell. Indeed, its torment is a thing that totally holds on. Indeed, it is a very evil abode for staying and living." (63-66)

And are such that when they spend, they are neither extravagant nor stingy; and adopt the way of moderation in between it. (67)

And who neither call any other deity besides God, nor wrongfully kill any soul held sacred by God and do not commit fornication. And whosever is guilty of these, shall bear the consequences of his sins. On the Day of Judgement, his torment shall gradually be made to increase and he shall forever abide in it disgraced. However, those who repent, profess faith and do good deeds, then God shall replace their bad deeds with good ones and God is very Forgiving, Merciful. And he who repents and does good deeds in fact returns to God. (68-71)

And who do not participate in any evil and when they have to pass by a frivolous thing, they pass with dignity. And such are they that when they are reminded through their Lord's revelations, they do not fall on them blind and deaf. And who continue to pray: "Our Lord! Grant us the soothing of eyes from our wives and our children and make us the leader of the pious." (72-74)

It is these people who shall get lofty abodes in Paradise because of their perseverance and they shall be welcomed in them with salutations and greetings. They shall live in them forever. Nice will it be a place to live and stay. (75-76)

Tell them: Were it not for inviting you, what concern does my Lord have for you? Thus you have denied it; so, it is soon bound to happen. (77)

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Explanation

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمٰنِ الَّذِيْنَ يَمْشُوْنَ عَلَى الْاَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَّاِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجٰهِلُوْنَ قَالُوْا سَلٰمًا ﴿۶۳﴾[57]

The word means "humility." Just as the word *salām* is a word of greeting, it is also used when the purpose to politely depart and go away from someone's presence. Thus it is precisely for this reason that Abraham (sws) said *salām* to this father.

In the previous verses, the haughty who were so inebriated by their arrogance that they would be not prepared to listen or understand anything said to them are mentioned. So much so, God's name الرَّحْمٰن became a sour point for them and they were not ready to even hear it. Now in this verse and in those which succeed it, the traits of the Most Merciful's servants are referred to. The purpose, on the one hand, is to mirror the glory and majesty of human character before these arrogant leaders of the Quraysh so that they in contrast are able to fully know their inner and outer shortcomings and, on the other hand, the believers are also effectively conveyed the inner and outer traits of the Most Merciful God's servants as well as the attitude they should adopt in this world.

Here, in due deference to the occasion and context, the first trait mentioned is "humility." A humble gait actually reflects the inner- self. The real purpose is to point to the fact they are so over-awed by the power and sovereignty of God that it finds expression in every step they take while walking. When a person has arrogance in him, it is evident in every action of his but it specially manifests itself in his gait. For this reason, the verse refers to it in particular. If a person submits to every truth, whether big or small, that comes his way, he is included among the servants of the Most Merciful God even if he walks proudly to support the truth. However, if he shows rebelliousness against the truth, he is from the companions of Satan even if his gait has humility in it. Here it may be kept in mind that arrogance is the way of Satan and such is the nature of this evil that no virtue can be nurtured in a person in its presence.

The word مخاطبہ means to indulge in an argument. The implication is that when uncouth and ill-mannered people, whose sarcastic remarks on the Prophet (sws) have been referred to earlier, make fun of the servants of the Most Merciful God, they do not entangle themselves with them and leave their company by following the way of Abraham (sws) and saying *salām* to them. As discussed before, this word is a polite way to ignore people. If a person withdraws from such people in such a manner, it can be hoped that if there is any semblance of virtue in him, he will review his attitude and instead of arguing will be inclined to listen and understand. However, if there is no such thing found in a person and the only thing he is after is argument and dispute, then it is not befitting for the servants of the Most Merciful God to talk to him. This topic will be discussed in detail in verse 55 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ.

57. And the servants of the Most Merciful God are ones who walk humbly on earth and when people overcome with emotions argue with them, they go away by saying *salām* to them.

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وَالَّذِيْنَ يَبِيْتُوْنَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَّقِيَامًا ﴿٦٤﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا اصْرِفْ عَنَّا عَذَابَ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ اِنَّ عَذَابَهَا كَانَ غَرَامًا ﴿٦٥﴾ اِنَّهَا سَآءَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَّمُقَامًا ﴿٦٦﴾[58]

The previous verse points to a certain trait of the servants of the Most Merciful related to their public life. Here their private lives are highlighted. The deep fondness of worship found in the expression سُجَّدًا وَّقِيَامًا does not need an elaboration in word. It does not merely refer to the obligatory prayer. It also refers to their great fondness and intense keenness for the night vigil in the *tahajjud* prayer. The implication is that these people do not spend their night in lust and luxury nor in their cosy beds while remaining indifferent to this world and the next. They continue to get up at night to pray for their forgiveness from the torment of Hell.

The word غَرَامًا means something that sticks and adheres. The words اِنَّ عَذَابَهَا كَانَ غَرَامًا are meant to reinforce the reason for which these people spend their night in anxiety and apprehension. The implication is that if these people get up at night to ask forgiveness from the punishment of Hell, then this is the right attitude that bespeaks their far-sightedness since such is the adhesive nature of this punishment that it is impossible to escape from it once it seizes a person. Whatever can be done to save one's self from it can only be done in this world and that too with God's help.

Though the words مُسْتَقَرًّا and مُقَامًا are also used synonymously, but when they are used together as in اِنَّهَا سَآءَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَّمُقَامًا then my research shows that they have a subtle difference: the former is used for a permanent resting place and the latter for a temporary one. In other words, such a horrific place is Hell that even as a temporary place of stay it cannot be tolerated, let alone as a permanent one. This is in contrast to the fact that even the worst of places may be such that they can be put up with for a short period of time.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اِذَآ اَنْفَقُوْا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوْا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوْا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ قَوَامًا ﴿٦٧﴾[59]

This verse points to their strong proclivity towards spending for the cause of God. They are not extravagant in their spending because they know that others have a right in their wealth too. They do not let their needs cross their limits so that they are able to fulfil the rights of others. Though it is very difficult to ascertain a moderate standard of living because it can change with change in circumstances, this change is not so

58. And who spend the nights while prostrating and standing before their Lord. And who pray: "Our Lord! Ward off from us the torment of Hell. Indeed, its torment is a thing that totally holds on. Indeed, it is a very evil abode for staying and living."

59. And are such that when they spend, they are neither extravagant nor stingy; and adopt the way of moderation in between it.

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small that a common person is not able to discern it. While keeping in view the standard of living of the society a person is living in, he can ascertain his own standard of living that affords him the opportunity to serve the underprivileged as well as his religion. In this regard, the example set by our illustrious forefathers is that instead of giving in to one's desires people should primarily think in another way: instead of raising their own standard of living, they should spend for the cause of God as much as possible. Spending more and more for this cause is not extravagance. As for those who have an insatiable desire to increase their standard of living, they become the brothers of Satan and they never have the urge to fulfil the rights of their brethren. A society in which this ailment become an epidemic, ultimately succumbs to the scourge of socialism.

وَالَّذِيْنَ لَا يَدْعُوْنَ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ وَلَا يَقْتُلُوْنَ النَّفْسَ الَّتِيْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا يَزْنُوْنَ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ يَلْقَ اَثَامًا ﴿۶۸﴾[60]

Al-Jawharī says that the word اَثَامٌ means "consequence of a sin."[61] This usage refers to the meaning of a noun or a verb that arises from its consequence. The expression: يَلْقَوْنَ غَيًّا (۱۹:۵۹) is an example of this usage.

The words النَّفْسَ الَّتِيْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ refer to the fact that God has regarded every life to be sacred and it is prohibited to commit excesses against it except if that person is guilty of a crime. In such a case, he will no longer have immunity from the law. The three crimes mentioned in the verse: murder, polytheism and fornication are the greatest ones that can be committed against God and humanity. All divine scriptures agree on this. This verse underscores that servants of the Most Merciful God do not even come near these crimes. Those who are perpetrating these crimes should remember that they will necessarily meet their fate.

يُّضٰعَفْ لَهُ الْعَذَابُ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَيَخْلُدْ فِيْهٖ مُهَانًا ﴿۶۹﴾[62]

The verbal noun مُضَاعَفَةٌ means "to add to something whether this increase is two fold or manifold." Usage of this word also shows that the meaning of gradual increase is also found in it, the way it is in verse 130 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān: لَا تَاْكُلُوا الرِّبٰوٓا اَضْعَافًا مُّضٰعَفَةً (do not consume interest increasing it manifold).

This verse depicts the consequence of the crimes mentioned in the previous verse. They will not be set free after being punished for sometime or that gradually their punishment will be reduced. In fact, they will abide in this punishment disgraced. The

60. And who neither call any other deity besides God, nor wrongfully kill any soul held sacred by God and do not commit fornication. And whosever is guilty of these, shall bear the consequences of his sins.

61. Abū Naṣr al-Jawharī, *Tāj al-Lughah*, vol. 5, 1858.

62. On the Day of Judgement, his torment shall gradually be made to increase and he shall forever abide in it disgraced.

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element of being disgraced doubles the horrific nature of the punishment. A punishment could have been without disgrace and humiliation. However, not this one. It may be kept in mind that these verses are being narrated before the arrogant people of the Quraysh and the real punishment of arrogance is eternal humiliation.

اِلَّا مَنۡ تَابَ وَاٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللّٰهُ سَيِّاٰتِهِمۡ حَسَنٰتٍ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوۡرًا رَّحِيۡمًا ﴿۷۰﴾ وَمَنۡ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَاِنَّهٗ يَتُوۡبُ اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَتَابًا ﴿۷۱﴾ [63]

The conditions and etiquette of repentance are mentioned in detail under verse 17-18 of Sūrah al-Nisā'. The good deeds of people who repent and profess faith and do righteous deeds replace their evil ones done in the past.

The words "and he who repents and does good deeds in fact returns to God" occur in parallel to the words "And whosoever is guilty of these, shall bear the consequences of his sins" of verse 68. The implication is that those who die with their sins will nonetheless face them but those who repent will return to God triumphant. The word مَتَابًا occurs as an undefined noun to magnify it. In other words, this return would be very grand and majestic. In the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus (sws) has very eloquently taught how happy God becomes on a penitent person and how much He rewards such a person. This verse also portrays the same thing (Matthew, 18: 10-14).

Found in this verse is also an aspect of encouragement for repentance: a person is anxious in leaving his sinful life thinking that he will have to find new company which is a very difficult task. The verse is assuring such people and says that those who leave sin and their sinful company acquire the company and blessings of God and those who acquire this need nothing else.

وَالَّذِيۡنَ لَا يَشۡهَدُوۡنَ الزُّوۡرَ ۙ وَاِذَا مَرُّوۡا بِاللَّغۡوِ مَرُّوۡا كِرَامًا ﴿۷۲﴾ [64]

The word زُورٌ means "falsehood" and لَّغْوٌ means "engagements that are not befitting to serious and mature people." The verse says that servants of the Most Merciful God pass by frivolous things the way a hygiene-loving person passes by a filthy place. In verse 55 of Ṣūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, this trait is stated thus: وَاِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغۡوَ اَعۡرَضُوۡا عَنۡهُ وَقَالُوۡا لَنَاۤ اَعۡمَالُنَا وَلَكُمۡ اَعۡمَالُكُمۡ ۖ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيۡكُمۡ ۖ لَا نَبۡتَغِى الۡجٰهِلِيۡنَ [65]

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63. However, those who repent, profess faith and do good deeds, then God shall replace their bad deeds with good ones and God is very Forgiving, Merciful. And he who repents and does good deeds in fact returns to God.

64. And who do not participate in any evil and when they have to pass by a frivolous thing, they pass with dignity.

65. And when they listen to nonsensical talk, they pay no heed to it and say: "To us our deeds and to you, yours. Thus accept our salutation. We do not like to get entangled with the ignorant."

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وَالَّذِيْنَ اِذَا ذُكِّرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَمْ يَخِرُّوْا عَلَيْهَا صُمًّا وَّعُمْيَانًا ﴿۷۳﴾[66]

This verse simultaneously praises the servants of the Most Merciful God and passes a sarcastic remark on the blind and deaf opponents of the Qur'ān who merely listen to it to raise objections. This topic is also brought up in detail in verse 19 of Sūrah al-Jinn and verses 36-37 of Sūrah al-Ma'ārij.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ اَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيّٰتِنَا قُرَّةَ اَعْيُنٍ وَّاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ اِمَامًا ﴿۷۴﴾[67]

Such are these people that besides being mindful of their own afterlife, they are also always concerned about the afterlife of their family. They are aware of what the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

اَلَا كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْؤُوْلٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِه

Beware that each of you is a shepherd, and each person will be held accountable for his herd.[68]

As a result, they do not spend their lives among their family in a heedless and indifferent way. Their proclivity is not towards worldly pleasures only without having any concern about the right or wrong path adopted by their families. Sūrah al-Qiyāmah and Sūrah al-Muṭaffifīn will mention this carefree attitude of theirs. On the other hand, the servants of the Most Merciful God are totally different in their attitude. They are most concerned with the accountability in the hereafter of their family and do not want any of them to adopt the path of Satan. Verse 26 of Sūrah al-Ṭūr mentions this concern in the following words: قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا كُنَّا قَبْلُ فِيْٓ اَهْلِنَا مُشْفِقِيْنَ (They will say: "Before this, we remained fearful about our families.") This fear makes them continuously pray to the Lord and they utter the words referred to in the verse. The implication being: let the conduct and character of my family be according to what pleases You and what we desire and we are leaders of the righteous in this world and in the hereafter too are bestowed with this status.

This explanation shows that this prayer does not relate to procuring leadership; it, in fact, relates to befittingly carrying out the responsibilities of the position of leadership every head of the family actually possesses. I have explained this verse in detail in one of my books *Tawḍīhāt*. Those who would like to know the details may consult it.

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66. And such are they that when they are reminded through their Lord's revelations, they do not fall on them blind and deaf.

67. And who continue to pray: "Our Lord! Grant us the soothing of eyes from our wives and our children and make us the leader of the pious."

68. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 412, (no. 2554).

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أُولٰٓئِكَ يُجْزَوْنَ الْغُرْفَةَ بِمَا صَبَرُوْا وَيُلَقَّوْنَ فِيْهَا تَحِيَّةً وَّ سَلٰمًا ﴿٧٥﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ حَسُنَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَّ مُقَامًا ﴿٧٦﴾[69]

Such were these people that they spent their lives in a very humble and down to earth way. For this reason, they will be bestowed with such high ranks in the hereafter as this verse mentions. Jesus (sws) is reported to have said: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

The words "because of their perseverance" show that engendering these traits and sustaining them is not an easy task; it needs a lot of steadfastness.

The words "they shall be welcomed in them with salutations and greetings" imply that those who pass this test will indeed be worthy of being greeted and welcomed by angels.

The words "nice will it be a place to live and stay" occur in contrast with the words mentioned for Hell earlier.

قُلْ مَا يَعْبَؤُا بِكُمْ رَبِّيْ لَوْلَا دُعَآؤُكُمْ ۚ فَقَدْ كَذَّبْتُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَكُوْنُ لِزَامًا ﴿٧٧﴾[70]

This at the end is a threat to the opponents of the Qur'ān. Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is directed to inform these people that if he is after them in this way, it is not because without them some of God's tasks will be left unfulfilled. God does not need them in any way. The only purpose is to call them to the truth and they are its sole beneficiaries and not the Prophet (sws). Now if they deny this message, they should be prepared to face its consequences that are bound to happen very soon. Here, readers may keep in mind the established practice of God that He has prescribed for those who deny messengers of God.

By the grace of God, the exegesis of this *sūrah* comes to its completion.

وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوٰىهُمْ اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and our last words are that gratitude be to God, Lord of the worlds).

Raḥmānābād
30th November 1973

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69. It is these people who shall get lofty abodes in Paradise because of their perseverance and they shall be welcomed in them with salutations and greetings. They shall live in them forever. Nice will it be a place to live and stay.

70.Tell them: Were it not for inviting you, what concern does my Lord have for you? Thus you have denied it; so, it is soon bound to happen.

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Tadabbur e Qur’ān

Sūrah Shu‘arā’ (26)

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Sūrah Shu‘arā’

Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah Furqān that precedes it. For this reason, there is no basic difference between the theme of both. It affirms the messenger hood of Muḥammad (sws) and the divinity of the Qur’ān. The nature of arguments and style of discourse are, however, different from the previous *sūrah*.

The anecdotes of the prophets of God that were rather concisely mentioned in the previous *sūrah* are mentioned in more detail in this one.

The Quraysh used to accuse the Prophet (sws) of being a soothsayer and a sorcerer. This accusation is specially dispelled.

A repetitive set of verses: اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیَةً ؕ وَ مَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِیْنَ وَ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِیْزُ الرَّحِیْمُ (certainly, there is a great sign in this; but most of them are not going to believe it; and your Lord, undoubtedly, He is Mighty and also very Merciful) occurs after every paragraph in this sūrah. This repetition shows that those who were demanding a sign of punishment from the Prophet (sws) as proof of his veracity are specially addressed. Their attention is directed at established facts of history: they should learn a lesson from the fate of the nations who denied their respective messengers and not blindly follow these nations as they were inflicted with God’s punishment.

Analysis of Meanings

Readers may glance at the meanings of the sūrah so that the connection between its various components with its them becomes fully evident.

Verses (1-9): In this introductory part, the Prophet (sws) is assured that he should worry if these people are not accepting faith and demanding a sign. If God wants, He will send down such a sign that will lower their necks. However, the Qur’ān does not need any external proof for its veracity: it is a proof of itself. If these people deny it, they will face each and every threat it is warning them of. There is no dearth of signs in this Universe, yet those who do not want to believe will not benefit from any sign. God can seize such people whenever He wants to as He is powerful and dominant. However, at the same time, He is very merciful too. Thus He gives respite to people in spite of their rebelliousness.

Verses (10-68): The anecdote of Moses (sws) is related. Events that took place from the time he came to the Pharaoh until the time he was drowned are briefly narrated. At the end of the anecdote, the repetitive verses referred to earlier occur.

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Verses (69-104): Abraham's (sws) invitation to his father and to his nation regarding monotheism is referred to. In this regard, the fate of those people is mentioned who relying on their alleged deities and intercessors had become indifferent to the Hereafter. The repetitive verses occur at the end.

Verses (105-122): The invitation of Noah (sws) to his nation is mentioned. They arrogantly denied it and thereafter were drowned. The repetitive verses then occur.

Verses (123-140): The invitation of Hūd (sws) to his nation 'Ād is alluded to. His nation haughtily rejected him. As a result, they were visited by God's scourge. The repetitive verses occur at the end of this anecdote.

Verses (141-159): The invitation of Ṣāliḥ (sws) to his nation Thamūd is cited. His nation rejected him and met its fate. The repetitive verses occur at the end of this anecdote.

Verses (160-175): The invitation of Lot (sws) to his nation is mentioned. Their attitude and fate is depicted. The repetitive verses occur at the end of this anecdote.

Verses (176-191): The way the people of Madyan treated Shu'ayb (sws) and his invitation is referred to. The fate they ultimately met is then stated. The repetitive verses occur at the end of this anecdote.

Verses (192-227): These are the concluding verses of the *sūrah* and explain what is discussed in its introductory part. Details can be seen when the verses are elucidated. Here the following aspects should be briefly kept in mind:

i. The source of the Qur'ān is divine revelation. God has revealed it to the Prophet (sws) through the trustworthy spirit.

ii. It is God's great favour to the Arabs that He has revealed the Qur'ān in Arabic. If they do not duly value it, it is their deprivation and misfortune.

iii. Arguments in favour of this Book are found in the scriptures of the previous prophets also, and the scholars of the People of the Book are aware of these arguments.

iv. The Book warns and admonishes the disbelievers in order to fully inform them before calling them to account so that those who are adamant on its denial deeply comprehend the consequences.

v. It is extreme foolishness to regard this Book to be inspired by the jinn or the devils. The traits of people who receive inspiration of devils are depicted.

vi. The Qur'ān is not the work of a poet. It is the work of God. Certain parameters which distinguish the Qur'ān from poetry and prophets from poets are referred to.

Section I: Verses (1-9)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

طٰسٓمٓ ﴿١﴾ تِلۡكَ اٰيٰتُ الۡكِتٰبِ الۡمُبِيۡنِ ﴿٢﴾ لَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَّفۡسَكَ اَلَّا يَكُوۡنُوۡا مُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿٣﴾ اِنۡ نَّشَاۡ نُنَزِّلۡ عَلَيۡهِمۡ

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مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ اٰيَةً فَظَلَّتْ اَعْنَاقُهُمْ لَهَا خٰضِعِيْنَ ۝٤ وَمَا يَاْتِيْهِمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرٍ مِّنَ الرَّحْمٰنِ مُحْدَثٍ اِلَّا كَانُوْا عَنْهُ
مُعْرِضِيْنَ ۝٥ فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوْا فَسَيَاْتِيْهِمْ اَنْۢبٰٓؤُا مَا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ۝٦ اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اِلَى الْاَرْضِ كَمْ اَنْۢبَتْنَا فِيْهَا
مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيْمٍ ۝٧ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝٨ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ۝٩

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

This is Sūrah Ṭā Sīn Mīm. These are the verses of the clear Book. Perhaps you will take your life because of the grief that these people are not accepting faith. If We want, We can send down a sign to them from the heavens; thus their necks will remain bent before it. And whatever fresh reminder comes to them from the Most Merciful God, they only keep evading it. So, they rejected it; then the warnings of that thing which they are making fun of will soon appear before them. (1-6)

Have they not seen the earth? We have sprouted from it an assortment of so many beneficial things in abundance. Indeed, there is a great sign in it; but most of them have not believed in it. And indeed your Lord is powerful also and very affectionate too. (7-9)

Explanation

طٰسٓمّٓ ۝١[1]

In my opinion, this is the enunciative (*khabar*) of a suppressed inchoative (*mubtadā'*). This has been revealed in the translation.

تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِيْنِ ۝٢[2]

The expression "clear Book" obviously refers to the Qur'ān. It has presented its message in a very eloquent language in different styles based on sound arguments. The purpose of mentioning this trait of the Qur'ān is to assure the Prophet (sws): the Book that he is presenting is the greatest proof of its own veracity. It does not need any external evidence. Thus he should ignore the people who are demanding a miracle or a sign of punishment as its proof. The sun does not need any evidence for its own existence. It is an evidence on itself.

لَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ اَلَّا يَكُوْنُوْا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝٣[3]

This verse sounds further assurance to the Prophet (sws) in a very affectionate way:

1. This is Sūrah Ṭā Sīn.
2. These are the verses of the clear Book.
3. Perhaps you will take your life because of the grief that these people are not accepting faith.

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if these people are not accepting faith, it is not his fault or that of this Book; in fact, they themselves are to be blamed for it: they are trying to find various excuses to deny a blatant reality; his only responsibility is to communicate, which he has carried out in its ultimate way and continuing to do so; he should not fret on the attitude of such wretched people.

اِنۡ نَّشَاۡ نُنَزِّلۡ عَلَيۡهِمۡ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ اٰيَةً فَظَلَّتۡ اَعۡنَاقُهُمۡ لَهَا خٰضِعِيۡنَ ﴿۴﴾[4]

Apparently the word should have been خاضعة used instead of خٰضِعِيۡنَ. However, it has occurred in deference to the governed noun (*muḍāf ilayh*) in اَعۡنَاقُهُم. This is a common linguistic style of Arabic. Some of its examples can be seen in the past *sūrahs* also.

Together with sounding assurance to the Prophet (sws), this verse also warns the disbelievers. The implication is that if these people are adamant on seeing a sign in order to believe in this Book, then they should remember that there is no dearth of signs with God. Whenever He wants, He can send down such a sign and make them acknowledge it with bent necks. However, He wants that they profess faith by exercising their intellect and through their own free will. Only this kind of faith holds value before Him and not what that is professed due to compulsion. The element of assurance for the Prophet (sws) found in this verse is that when this is the established practice of God regarding professing faith, he should not be worried on their demands and leave their matter to God.

وَمَا يَاۡتِيۡهِمۡ مِّنۡ ذِكۡرٍ مِّنَ الرَّحۡمٰنِ مُحۡدَثٍ اِلَّا كَانُوۡا عَنۡهُ مُعۡرِضِيۡنَ ﴿۵﴾ فَقَدۡ كَذَّبُوۡا فَسَيَاۡتِيۡهِمۡ اَنۡۢبٰٓؤُا مَا كَانُوۡا بِهٖ يَسۡتَهۡزِءُوۡنَ ﴿۶﴾[5]

In slightly different words, these verses discuss precisely what has been mentioned in the last verse of Sūrah Furqān. The implication is that the purpose of all this arrangement made by the most merciful Lord to remind and educate people was to make these people think and adopt the right attitude in life. Yet such are these people that the more measures were taken to cure them, the more they hated the doctor and his prescription. The Almighty reminded them in all sorts of styles; yet they continued to evade and made fun of the Qur'ān and the Messenger. After this attitude they have adopted, the only option that remains is that each and every consequence the Qur'ān warned them of and which they have made fun of appear before them one by one. Thus they will come before them.

4. If We want, We can send down a sign to them from the heavens; thus their necks will remain bent before it.

5. And whatever fresh reminder comes to them from the Most Merciful God, they only keep evading it. So, they rejected it; then the warnings of that thing which they are making fun of will soon appear before them.

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اَوَلَمۡ يَرَوۡا اِلَى الۡاَرۡضِ كَمۡ اَنۡۢبَتۡنَا فِيۡهَا مِنۡ كُلِّ زَوۡجٍ كَرِيۡمٍ ﴿۷﴾[6]

The word زَوۡجٌ means "type" and thus the expression مِنۡ كُلِّ زَوۡجٍ would mean "various types of things." The كَرِيۡمٍ word here means "being beneficial." The Arabs generally called grapes as كرم. Obviously, they kept this name keeping in view its profound benefits.

The implication of the verse is that why are these people waiting for a sign of punishment from the heavens and why do they not see that multifarious favours and blessings of God spread in the earth? These favours have been created by the merciful and gracious Lord so that people benefit from them and are also receive reminders.

اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكۡثَرُهُمۡ مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿۸﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الرَّحِيۡمُ ﴿۹﴾[7]

What greater a sign than this do these want to satisfy their demands. Here all the arguments that the Qur'ān has comprehensively presented in favour of monotheism and the hereafter may be refreshed in the mind and to attest which the Qur'ān has referred to these favours and benefits of the earth. This subject will be fully explained in verse 10 of Sūrah Luqmān and verse 27 of Sūrah al-Sajdah ahead.

The words وَ مَا كَانَ اَكۡثَرُ هُمۡ مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ imply that there is no scarcity of signs with the Almighty. The fact is that each and every place on this earth has them; yet they can be of no use to those who do not want to accept faith.

The words وَ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الرَّحِيۡمُ express what is just said in the light of God's attributes. Since He is powerful, He can do anything and no one can stop Him. If He immediately punishes them, none can save them from it. However, He is also merciful. Hence He does not show haste in punishing people so that those among them who would like to mend their ways benefit from this respite and earn His mercy. The inchoative is repeated here to stress these attributes of God and direct the attention of people that it is by not keeping in mind these attributes that people mistook His respite as a proof of their own veracity. Once they made this wrong assumption, they started to mock those who invited them to mend their ways. These verses, as has been referred to earlier, will occur repeatedly in this *sūrah*, and hence readers may well fully understand them so that their explanation is not needed again later.

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6. Have they not seen the earth? We have sprouted from it an assortment of so many beneficial things in abundance.

7. Indeed, there is a great sign in it; but most of them have not believed in it. And indeed your Lord is powerful also and very affectionate too.

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Section II: Verses (10-68)

In this section, the anecdote of Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh that was briefly referred to in the previous *sūrah* is discussed in detail. This anecdote begins at the instant when Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) were asked to go to the Pharaoh and ends on the destruction through drowning of the Pharaoh and his army. All important events of this phase are referred to in it. Each and every part of this anecdote is a source of assurance to the Prophet (sws) and his companions and teaches a lesson to his rivals. However, a special aspect that needs attention with regard to the theme of the *sūrah* is that those who lose their ability to understand by becoming slaves to their desires are not influenced by the greatest of miracles. They awake from their slumber only when they see their fate.

Readers may now study these verses in the light of this background

Text and Translation

وَ اِذۡ نَادٰی رَبُّكَ مُوۡسٰۤی اَنِ ائۡتِ الۡقَوۡمَ الظّٰلِمِیۡنَ ﴿۱۰﴾ قَوۡمَ فِرۡعَوۡنَ ؕ اَلَا یَتَّقُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّیۡۤ اَخَافُ اَنۡ
یُّكَذِّبُوۡنِ ﴿۱۲﴾ وَ یَضِیۡقُ صَدۡرِیۡ وَ لَا یَنۡطَلِقُ لِسَانِیۡ فَاَرۡسِلۡ اِلٰی هٰرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۳﴾ وَ لَهُمۡ عَلَیَّ ذَنۡۢبٌ فَاَخَافُ اَنۡ
یَّقۡتُلُوۡنِ ﴿۱۴﴾ قَالَ كَلَّا ۚ فَاذۡهَبَا بِاٰیٰتِنَاۤ اِنَّا مَعَكُمۡ مُّسۡتَمِعُوۡنَ ﴿۱۵﴾ فَاۡتِیَا فِرۡعَوۡنَ فَقُوۡلَاۤ اِنَّا رَسُوۡلُ رَبِّ
الۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ ﴿۱۶﴾ اَنۡ اَرۡسِلۡ مَعَنَا بَنِیۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِیۡلَ ﴿۱۷﴾ قَالَ اَلَمۡ نُرَبِّكَ فِیۡنَا وَلِیۡدًا وَّ لَبِثۡتَ فِیۡنَا مِنۡ عُمُرِكَ
سِنِیۡنَ ﴿۱۸﴾ وَ فَعَلۡتَ فَعۡلَتَكَ الَّتِیۡ فَعَلۡتَ وَ اَنۡتَ مِنَ الۡكٰفِرِیۡنَ ﴿۱۹﴾ قَالَ فَعَلۡتُهَاۤ اِذًا وَّ اَنَا مِنَ الضَّآلِّیۡنَ ﴿۲۰﴾
فَفَرَرۡتُ مِنۡكُمۡ لَمَّا خِفۡتُكُمۡ فَوَهَبَ لِیۡ رَبِّیۡ حُكۡمًا وَّ جَعَلَنِیۡ مِنَ الۡمُرۡسَلِیۡنَ ﴿۲۱﴾ وَ تِلۡكَ نِعۡمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَیَّ اَنۡ
عَبَّدۡتَّ بَنِیۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِیۡلَ ﴿۲۲﴾ قَالَ فِرۡعَوۡنُ وَ مَا رَبُّ الۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ وَ مَا بَیۡنَهُمَا ؕ اِنۡ
كُنۡتُمۡ مُّوۡقِنِیۡنَ ﴿۲۴﴾ قَالَ لِمَنۡ حَوۡلَهٗۤ اَلَا تَسۡتَمِعُوۡنَ ﴿۲۵﴾ قَالَ رَبُّكُمۡ وَ رَبُّ اٰبَآئِكُمُ الۡاَوَّلِیۡنَ ﴿۲۶﴾ قَالَ اِنَّ
رَسُوۡلَكُمُ الَّذِیۡۤ اُرۡسِلَ اِلَیۡكُمۡ لَمَجۡنُوۡنٌ ﴿۲۷﴾ قَالَ رَبُّ الۡمَشۡرِقِ وَ الۡمَغۡرِبِ وَ مَا بَیۡنَهُمَا ؕ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ﴿۲۸﴾
قَالَ لَئِنِ اتَّخَذۡتَ اِلٰهًا غَیۡرِیۡ لَاَجۡعَلَنَّكَ مِنَ الۡمَسۡجُوۡنِیۡنَ ﴿۲۹﴾ قَالَ اَوَ لَوۡ جِئۡتُكَ بِشَیۡءٍ مُّبِیۡنٍ ﴿۳۰﴾ قَالَ
فَاۡتِ بِهٖۤ اِنۡ كُنۡتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِیۡنَ ﴿۳۱﴾ فَاَلۡقٰی عَصَاهُ فَاِذَا هِیَ ثُعۡبَانٌ مُّبِیۡنٌ ﴿۳۲﴾ وَّ نَزَعَ یَدَهٗ فَاِذَا هِیَ بَیۡضَآءُ
لِلنّٰظِرِیۡنَ ﴿۳۳﴾ قَالَ لِلۡمَلَاِ حَوۡلَهٗۤ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَسٰحِرٌ عَلِیۡمٌ ﴿۳۴﴾ یُّرِیۡدُ اَنۡ یُّخۡرِجَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اَرۡضِكُمۡ بِسِحۡرِهٖ ۖ فَمَاذَا
تَاۡمُرُوۡنَ ﴿۳۵﴾ قَالُوۡۤا اَرۡجِهۡ وَ اَخَاهُ وَ ابۡعَثۡ فِی الۡمَدَآئِنِ حٰشِرِیۡنَ ﴿۳۶﴾ یَاۡتُوۡكَ بِكُلِّ سَحَّارٍ عَلِیۡمٍ ﴿۳۷﴾ فَجُمِعَ السَّحَرَةُ

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لِمِيْقَاتِ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَّقِيْلَ لِلنَّاسِ هَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّجْتَمِعُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ لَعَلَّنَا نَتَّبِعُ السَّحَرَةَ اِنْ كَانُوْا هُمُ الْغٰلِبِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾
فَلَمَّا جَآءَ السَّحَرَةُ قَالُوْا لِفِرْعَوْنَ اَئِنَّ لَنَا لَاَجْرًا اِنْ كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغٰلِبِيْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ قَالَ نَعَمْ وَ اِنَّكُمْ اِذًا لَّمِنَ
الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ قَالَ لَهُمْ مُّوْسٰٓى اَلْقُوْا مَآ اَنْتُمْ مُّلْقُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَاَلْقَوْا حِبَالَهُمْ وَعِصِيَّهُمْ وَقَالُوْا بِعِزَّةِ فِرْعَوْنَ اِنَّا لَنَحْنُ
الْغٰلِبُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَاَلْقٰى مُوْسٰى عَصَاهُ فَاِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَاْفِكُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ فَاُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ سٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا
بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ رَبِّ مُوْسٰى وَ هٰرُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ قَالَ اٰمَنْتُمْ لَهٗ قَبْلَ اَنْ اٰذَنَ لَكُمْ ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَكَبِيْرُكُمُ الَّذِيْ عَلَّمَكُمُ
السِّحْرَ ۚ فَلَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۗ لَاُقَطِّعَنَّ اَيْدِيَكُمْ وَاَرْجُلَكُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ وَّلَاُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ قَالُوْا لَا ضَيْرَ ۫ اِنَّآ
اِلٰى رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ اِنَّا نَطْمَعُ اَنْ يَّغْفِرَ لَنَا رَبُّنَا خَطٰيٰنَآ اَنْ كُنَّآ اَوَّلَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى مُوْسٰٓى
اَنْ اَسْرِ بِعِبَادِيْٓ اِنَّكُمْ مُّتَّبَعُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ فَاَرْسَلَ فِرْعَوْنُ فِي الْمَدَآئِنِ حٰشِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ لَشِرْذِمَةٌ قَلِيْلُوْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾
وَاِنَّهُمْ لَنَا لَغَآئِظُوْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَاِنَّا لَجَمِيْعٌ حٰذِرُوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَاَخْرَجْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّعُيُوْنٍ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَّكُنُوْزٍ وَّمَقَامٍ كَرِيْمٍ ﴿٥٨﴾
كَذٰلِكَ ۫ وَاَوْرَثْنٰهَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿٥٩﴾ فَاَتْبَعُوْهُمْ مُّشْرِقِيْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ فَلَمَّا تَرَآءَ الْجَمْعٰنِ قَالَ اَصْحٰبُ مُوْسٰٓى اِنَّا
لَمُدْرَكُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالَ كَلَّا ۚ اِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّيْ سَيَهْدِيْنِ ﴿٦٢﴾ فَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى مُوْسٰٓى اَنِ اضْرِبْ بِّعَصَاكَ الْبَحْرَ ۫ فَانْفَلَقَ فَكَانَ
كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَالطَّوْدِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَ اَزْلَفْنَا ثَمَّ الْاٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَاَنْجَيْنَا مُوْسٰى وَ مَنْ مَّعَهٗٓ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ ثُمَّ
اَغْرَقْنَا الْاٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ۫ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٦٨﴾

And when your Lord called Moses: "Go to the unjust nation, to the Pharaoh's nation; will they not have fear?" He replied: "Lord! I fear that they will deny me and my chest is in discomfort and my language is also not fluent; so send message to Aaron. And there is also one crime for which I am liable to them; so, I dread that they might kill me." (10-14)

God said: "Certainly not! Thus both of you go with Our signs; We shall be hearing with you. So, go to the Pharaoh and tell him: 'We are the messengers of the Lord of worlds that you let the Israelites go with us.'" He replied: "Did we not raise you in childhood among us? And you spent many years of your life among us and then did what you did and you are among the ungrateful." (15-19)

Moses replied: "I did this then and I was among the wrongdoers. Then when I felt afraid of you, I ran away from you. Then my Lord blessed me with the power of decision-making and made me from among the messengers. And this is a favour you are impressing upon me because of which you have enslaved the Israelites?" (20-22)

The Pharaoh said: "And what is this Rabb al-'Ālamīn?" Moses replied: "The Lord

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of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them, if you are ones who can have conviction." He said to those around him: "Do you not hear?" Moses said: "Your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers too." The Pharaoh said: "This messenger of yours who has been sent to you is totally mad." Moses said: "The Lord of the East and the West and whatever is between them if you have intellect." He said: "If you make anyone else except me as God, I shall imprison you." Moses asked: "Even if I have brought a clear sign to you?" The Pharaoh said: "Present it, if you are truthful." At this, he placed his staff; then at once it became a living serpent and when he drew out his hand, it suddenly appeared shinning for the onlookers. The Pharaoh said to the courtiers around him: "This person surely is an adept magician. He wants to turn you out of your land through his magic. So, what do you advise?" (23-35)

They said: "Put him off and his brother for now and send summoners in the city who should bring all the expert magicians to you." Thus at the prescribed time of an appointed day, the magicians were assembled and it was proclaimed among the people: "People, gather together so that we can support the magicians if they can prove dominant." Then when the magicians gathered, they said to the Pharaoh: "Is there also a reward for us if we become dominant?" He replied: "Yes and at that time you shall also be among the favoured ones." (36-42)

Moses said them: "Present what you want to present." They placed their ropes and sticks and said: "By the Pharaoh's majesty! We alone shall remain dominant." Then Moses placed his staff; thus it suddenly began devouring the spell they were weaving. So, the magicians immediately fell down in prostration. They said: "We have professed faith in the Lord of the worlds, in the Lord of Moses and Aaron." (43-48)

He said: "You believed in him before I could give you permission! Indeed, he is your guru who has taught magic to you. So, soon you will come to know. I shall have your limbs severed from alternate sides and crucify all of you." They answered: "No fear! We shall return only to our Lord. We hope that our Lord shall forgive our sins because we are those who first accepted faith." (49-51)

And We sent a revelation to Moses: "Set off with My servants by night. Indeed, you will be pursued." Thus, the Pharaoh sent summoners in the cities that these are a handful of people and are angering us and we are an alert group. (52-56)

Thus We took them out from orchards, fountains, treasures and from an abode of honour. Thus do We do and We made the Israelites the inheritors of these things. (57-59)

Hence at daybreak these people set out to pursue them. Then when both groups faced each other, the companions of Moses shouted: "We have been seized." Moses said: "Certainly not! My Lord is with me. He shall guide me." (60-62)

Thus We sent a revelation to Moses: "Strike your staff on the sea." So it rent asunder and each part became like a huge mountain. And We brought the other group near that place and saved Moses and those who were with him. Then We drowned the others. (63-66)

Indeed, there is a great sign in this, and most of them are not going to believe it.

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And indeed your Lord, He is Mighty and Merciful. (67-68)

Explanation

وَاِذْ نَادٰى رَبُّكَ مُوْسٰٓى اَنِ ائْتِ الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۙ﴿۱۰﴾ قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ ؕ اَلَا يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿۱۱﴾[8]

This is a reference to that part of Moses' anecdote when while he was returning from Madyan, God spoke to him in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā. He was assigned messengerhood and sent to the Pharaoh and his people to warn them.

The style اَلَا يَتَّقُوْنَ (will they not have fear) highlights the extreme rebelliousness and disorder of the Pharaoh and his nation. An accurate rendering of this expression would be: "Will these unjust people continue to increase in their rebelliousness in an uncontrolled manner and not fear God's wrath?" It will become evident from verses 125, 143, 162 and 178 ahead that other prophets too warned their nations in this way. Anger, yearning, rebuke and the proximity of God's scourge found in this style does not need any elaboration.

قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اَنْ يُّكَذِّبُوْنِ ﴿۱۲﴾ وَيَضِيْقُ صَدْرِيْ وَلَا يَنْطَلِقُ لِسَانِيْ فَاَرْسِلْ اِلٰى هٰرُوْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾ وَلَهُمْ عَلَيَّ ذَنْۢبٌ فَاَخَافُ اَنْ يَّقْتُلُوْنِ ﴿۱۴﴾[9]

Moses (sws) expressed immense fear for this great responsibility and this fear is an essential consequence of sensitivity towards this responsibility. Before departing for Madyan, he fully realized the extent of difficulty in expressing the truth before the Pharaoh. Moreover, he also felt that he was not an effective orator. Also the accidental slaying of the Copt weighed heavily upon him; he knew how much this angered the Pharaoh and his chiefs. He was aware that they would not easily forgive him for this especially when he goes to them as a messenger of God and warns them on their oppression and injustice. Besides presenting these fears, he also requested God to make his brother Aaron a co-messenger if he had to take up this responsibility since he was an eloquent orator and so that both could carry out this obligation effectively.

قَالَ كَلَّا ۚ فَاذْهَبَا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُّسْتَمِعُوْنَ ﴿۱۵﴾ فَاْتِيَا فِرْعَوْنَ فَقُوْلَآ اِنَّا رَسُوْلُ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۙ﴿۱۶﴾ اَنْ اَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ؕ﴿۱۷﴾[10]

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8. And when your Lord called Moses: "Go to the unjust nation, to the Pharaoh's nation; will they not have fear?"

9. He replied: "Lord! I fear that they will deny me and my chest is in discomfort and my language is also not fluent; so send message to Aaron. And there is also one crime for which I am liable to them; so, I dread that they might kill me."

10. God said: "Certainly not! Thus both of you go with Our signs; We shall be hearing with you. So, go to the Pharaoh and tell him: 'We are the messengers of the Lord of worlds that you

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God emphatically put to rest Moses’ fear that the Copts would kill him but accepted his request regarding Aaron (sws) as is indicated here and explicitly mentioned at other instances. Both should fearlessly proceed to their duty. The words اِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُّسْتَمِعُوْنَ, sound assurance in a very eloquent manner. In verse 46 of Sūrah Ṭāhā, the words similarly used are: اِنَّنِيْ مَعَكُمَآ اَسْمَعُ وَاَرٰى (I am with both of you hearing and seeing and let Me see who dare harms you).

It becomes evident from the words اِنَّا رَسُوْلُ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ that Aaron (sws) was a helper messenger to Moses (sws). Thus in verse 47 of Sūrah Ṭāhā it is stated: اِنَّا رَسُوْلَا رَبِّكَ (We both are God’s Messengers to you). This mention before the Pharaoh is for the purpose of conclusive communication of the truth: not one, but two messengers have been sent to him by the Almighty. If even after this, he does not adopt the right attitude, it is his own misfortune.

Moses’ demand of asking the Israelites to go with him has been discussed in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah Ṭāhā. It is evident from the Torah that Moses (sws) wanted to take them to celebrate the *‘īd* festival of animal sacrifice to a place in the desert at a distance of three days. However, the exact place in the desert is not specified. My mentor, Imām Farāhī, thinks that Moses (sws) wanted to take them to Makkah for *ḥajj* and animal sacrifice. I have presented his opinion as a view that needs proof. I do not have his arguments before me, and hence not fully convinced of it. I have mentioned my view in the exegesis of Sūrah al-A‘rāf. Some factors reinforce the view of my mentor and I may well explain them at an appropriate instance ahead.

Together with warning the Pharaoh, this is the first directive given to Moses (sws) for organizing the Israelites and for their religious revival.

There can be two reasons for this lack of clarity in this specific matter in the Torah. Either Moses (sws) did not want to make this evident to the Pharaoh or the Jews actually concealed the details thinking that its mention would be against their own benefit in much the same way they concealed the history of Ishmā’īl (sws) and the history of the Baytullāh.

The expression اَنْ اَرْسِلْ is actually بِاَنْ اَرْسِلْ. The ب has been suppressed in accordance with a common linguistic principle.

قَالَ اَلَمْ نُرَبِّكَ فِيْنَا وَلِيْدًا وَّلَبِثْتَ فِيْنَا مِنْ عُمُرِكَ سِنِيْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَفَعَلْتَ فَعْلَتَكَ الَّتِيْ فَعَلْتَ وَاَنْتَ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٩﴾[11]

A part of the anecdote is suppressed before these verses: At God’s behest, Moses (sws) took his brother Aaron (sws) along with him to the Pharaoh and his courtiers. Besides warning them, he also asked them to let the Israelites go with him. How could the Pharaoh have tolerated that someone and that too an Israelite make such a big and

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let the Israelites go with us.’”

11. He replied: “Did we not raise you in childhood among us? And you spent many years of your life among us and then did what you did and you are among the ungrateful.”

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important demand from him. So with great arrogance he uttered the words referred to in the verse. The word كَافِرِ here means "ungrateful." The words "then did what you did" refers to Moses' slaying of the Copt. This ambiguous style has been adopted to refer to its gravity. The implication of the Pharaoh was that in spite of being raised by him and in spite of committing a crime against his nation, he is claiming to be a Prophet and demanding the Israelites go with him!

قَالَ فَعَلْتُهَآ اِذًا وَّاَنَا مِنَ الضَّآلِّيْنَ ﴿۲۰﴾ فَفَرَرْتُ مِنْكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُكُمْ فَوَهَبَ لِيْ رَبِّيْ حُكْمًا وَّجَعَلَنِيْ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿۲۱﴾[12]

The word ضَآلِّ here means "in search of the truth," the way it is used in verse 7 of Sūrah Ḍuhā: وَوَجَدَكَ ضَآلًّا فَهَدٰى (and found you searching and guided you).

It is evident from this verse that Moses (sws) openly confessed to the killing of the Copt in the words it mentions. So after passing all the phases mentioned in the verse he was made a messenger by God and sent to them. His current status is absolutely different from his previous one and hence they must listen to him while disregarding what happened in the past.

The slaying of the Copt has been discussed in detail in Sūrah Ṭāhā. This happened absolutely involuntarily merely with the noble emotions of helping an oppressed person. Moses (sws) was stricken with extreme grief after it. He repented thereafter and God forgave him.

I have also dealt at length under verse 17 of Sūrah Hūd that prophets of God are of upright nature even before they are chosen by God as His envoys. However, mere upright nature and intellect are not enough to guide a person in the rugged terrain of life. He is faced by many uncertainties in this terrain in which he wanders which way to go unless divinely guided. It is this wisdom which Moses (sws) has referred to by the word حُكْم. It will be discussed in more detail in verse 83 ahead.

وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَيَّ اَنْ عَبَّدْتَّ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿۲۲﴾[13]

This is the answer given by Moses (sws) to the Pharaoh when he expressed his favour to him, as mentioned in verse 18-19 earlier. His implication is that this no doubt is a favour but it does not mean that Pharaoh has the right to enslave all the Israelites while he does not even have the right to protest against this.

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12. Moses replied: "I did this then and I was among the wrongdoers. Then when I felt afraid of you, I ran away from you. Then my Lord blessed me with the power of decision-making and made me from among the messengers."

13. "And this is a favour you are impressing upon me because of which you have enslaved the Israelites?"

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قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَ مَا رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾[14]

The Pharaoh was dumbfounded at the reply of Moses (sws) and did not have anything else to say. So for the sake of face-saving, he tried to make fun of Moses' claim to prophethood. It has already been mentioned in verse 16 earlier that Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) presented themselves as messengers of the Lord of the worlds (Rabb al-'Ālamīn). The Pharaoh expressed derision at this expression. He meant that he himself was Rabb al-'Ālamīn and the avatar of the greatest deity. Hence in his presence who is the Lord of the worlds that Moses (sws) is referring to who has sent him as his messenger.

قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ وَ مَا بَيْنَهُمَا ؕ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّوْقِنِيْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾[15]

This is the next step Moses (sws) took in response to the humiliating attitude of the Pharaoh. It may be kept in mind that the word بَيْنَهُمَا encompasses the sun, the moon and other heavenly bodies. The Pharaoh regarded himself to be the avatar of the sun God, as has been explained at an appropriate instance. The words اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّوْقِنِيْنَ imply that Moses (sws) has explained the actual reality; whether they believe in it or not is their responsibility and not his.

قَالَ لِمَنْ حَوْلَهٗۤ اَلَا تَسْتَمِعُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾[16]

The answer given by Moses (sws) was an effective blow to the Pharaoh's arrogance. This really angered him and he addressed his courtiers.

قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ وَ رَبُّ اٰبَآئِكُمُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾[17]

Disregarding the Pharaoh's anger, Moses (sws) took another step and stated what is mentioned in this verse. It may be kept in mind that unfounded religions are based on the blind following of the forefathers. For this reason, Moses (sws) further emphasized that if they rely on the traditions of their forefathers in this matter, then this reliance has no basis. They too have the same Lord he is calling them to. If they disregarded Him as their Lord and invested someone else with this status, they have led themselves astray and hence the Pharaoh should not foolishly follow them and face destruction.

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14. The Pharaoh said: "And what is this Rabb al-'Ālamīn?"

15. Moses replied: "The Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them, if you are ones who can have conviction."

16. He said to those around him: "Do you not hear?"

17. Moses said: "Your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers too."

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قَالَ اِنَّ رَسُوْلَكُمُ الَّذِيْٓ اُرْسِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ لَمَجْنُوْنٌ ﴿٢٧﴾[18]

Upon hearing this from Moses (sws), the Pharaoh got infuriated and humiliatingly dubbed him as a madman before his courtiers. The implication was that what doubt is left for a person to be a lunatic when he is trying to prove that their forefathers had gone astray. Hidden in these words is sarcasm as well: look, this is the person who claims to be sent to them as a prophet!

قَالَ رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ۭ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾[19]

Moses (sws) ignored this insult and took a further step mentioned in this verse. This was the last blow at the divinity claimed by the Pharaoh. He regarded himself to be the avatar of the sun god. Moses (sws) impressed upon him that if someone who neither has control over the west nor the east regards himself to be Lord, then this is only his own foolishness and that of his followers. If these people use their intellect, they will come to know how true is what Moses (sws) is saying.

قَالَ لَىِٕنِ اتَّخَذْتَ اِلٰـهًا غَيْرِيْ لَاَجْعَلَنَّكَ مِنَ الْمَسْجُوْنِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾[20]

This was the frenzied response of the Pharaoh when he saw that Moses (sws) was not listening to any of what he had said and was valiantly expressing one after the other the arguments he had in mind. Every statement uttered by Moses (sws) was sterner than the previous one.

قَالَ اَوَلَوْ جِئْتُكَ بِشَيْءٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٣٠﴾[21]

The Pharaoh reckoned that Moses (sws) would be terror-stricken after listening to this open warning. But Moses (sws) stated his next move in a very serious and composed way.

قَالَ فَاْتِ بِهٖٓ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ فَاَلْقٰى عَصَاهُ فَاِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَّنَزَعَ يَدَهٗ فَاِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاۗءُ لِلنّٰظِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾[22]

At the Pharaoh's demand, Moses (sws) showed the two miracles mentioned in this verse. These miracles are explained in the exegesis of Sūrah Ṭāhā. Here this much needs to be noted that these miracles were shown to the Pharaoh at his demand by

18. The Pharaoh said: "This messenger of yours who has been sent to you is totally mad."
19. Moses said: "The Lord of the East and the West and whatever is between them if you have intellect."
20. He said: "If you make anyone else except me as God, I shall imprison you."
21. Moses asked: "Even if I have brought a clear sign to you?"
22. The Pharaoh said: "Present it, if you are truthful."

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Moses (sws) when he threatened to imprison him. This transpired in response to Moses' (sws) call to monotheism that was entirely based on arguments drawn from human intellect and nature and from the world around a person and that within him.

قَالَ لِلْمَلَاِ حَوْلَهٗۤ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَسٰحِرٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۳۴﴾ يُّرِيْدُ اَنْ يُّخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنْ اَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهٖ ۖ فَمَاذَا تَاْمُرُوْنَ ﴿۳۵﴾[23]

Such was the awesome nature of these miracles that the Pharaoh and his courtiers were wonderstruck. Yet the Pharaoh cleverly tried to do away with this potent influence on people. He praised Moses (sws) for this feat because this could not be avoided; at the same time, he tried to give this impression to the people that all this was the product of magic and had nothing to do with prophethood. In order to disillusion people, he further implanted an evil thought in their minds that this person wants to win them over through magic and turn them out of their country. I have explained at another place that at this instance time was ripe for this evil thought's implantation. Fearing this threat, the Pharaoh asked for the suggestion of his courtiers.

قَالُوْۤا اَرْجِهْ وَاَخَاهُ وَابْعَثْ فِى الْمَدَآئِنِ حٰشِرِيْنَ ﴿۳۶﴾ يَاْتُوْكَ بِكُلِّ سَحَّارٍ عَلِيْمٍ ﴿۳۷﴾[24]

The courtiers advised him to counter Moses' magic through magic but it would not be appropriate to do this through ordinary magicians, as it may lead to humiliation and defeat. The verse mentions the advice they gave him.

فَجُمِعَ السَّحَرَةُ لِمِيْقَاتِ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ ﴿۳۸﴾ وَّقِيْلَ لِلنَّاسِ هَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّجْتَمِعُوْنَ ﴿۳۹﴾ لَعَلَّنَا نَتَّبِعُ السَّحَرَةَ اِنْ كَانُوْا هُمُ الْغٰلِبِيْنَ ﴿۴۰﴾[25]

At another instance, it is specified that the time of assembly was a festive occasion and the time prescribed was before midday. The place selected was a vast field conveniently accessible to people from all sides. Moreover, people were motivated to gather by telling them that these magicians were coming together to attempt to save the country from a grave danger. Thus it was the duty of every person to be present to encourage and support them. The element of exhortation found in the interrogative style found in هَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّجْتَمِعُوْنَ is not hidden from the eyes of those who have a flair for language. Some very subtle examples of this style can be seen in earlier *sūrahs* and some others are coming up in the succeeding ones. Concealed in the last of the above

23. The Pharaoh said to the courtiers around him: "This person surely is an adept magician. He wants to turn you out of your land through his magic. So, what do you advise?"

24. They said: "Put him off and his brother for now and send summoners in the city who should bring all the expert magicians to you."

25. Thus at the prescribed time of an appointed day, the magicians were assembled and it was proclaimed among the people: "People, gather together so that we can support the magicians if they can prove dominant."

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cited verses is the appeal that since these magicians will be trying to protect their national honour everyone should have the desire that they are victorious and should be present to support and encourage them.

فَلَمَّا جَآءَ السَّحَرَةُ قَالُوْا لِفِرْعَوْنَ اَئِنَّ لَنَا لَاَجْرًا اِنْ كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغٰلِبِيْنَ ﴿۴۱﴾ قَالَ نَعَمْ وَ اِنَّكُمْ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ ﴿۴۲﴾[26]

These verses cite a professional request of the magicians and the Pharaoh's response.

قَالَ لَهُمْ مُّوْسٰۤى اَلْقُوْا مَاۤ اَنْتُمْ مُّلْقُوْنَ ﴿۴۳﴾ فَاَلْقَوْا حِبَالَهُمْ وَ عِصِيَّهُمْ وَ قَالُوْا بِعِزَّةِ فِرْعَوْنَ اِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْغٰلِبُوْنَ ﴿۴۴﴾[27]

The ب in the expression بِعِزَّةِ فِرْعَوْنَ connotes an oath. Since the Pharaoh was regarded to be a deity, whenever people took an important step, they would swear by his honour.

فَاَلْقٰى مُوْسٰى عَصَاهُ فَاِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَاْفِكُوْنَ ﴿۴۵﴾[28]

It is evident from the style مَا يَاْفِكُوْنَ that not only did Moses' (sws) staff exposed the trick shown by the magicians but also exposed the nature of all that they had did by that time. When he shattered their master trick, it was as if his staff brought to light the utter frailty of their skill.

فَاُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ سُجِدِيْنَ ﴿۴۶﴾ قَالُوْۤا اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۴۷﴾ رَبِّ مُوْسٰى وَ هٰرُوْنَ ﴿۴۸﴾[29]

It has been explained at another instance that a magician, if he has in him the spark of accepting the truth, is in the best position to judge between magic and miracle. For this reason, as soon as the magicians saw this miracle, they fell down in prostration and openly declared that they had accepted faith. Earlier in verse 16 and 24, it has been mentioned how angry the Pharaoh was at the mention of "the Lord of the worlds" by Moses (sws). Without mincing words, the magicians professed their faith in "the Lord of the worlds." They further added that, He is the Lord of Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) so that not an iota of doubt remains.

This is just an ordinary marvel of faith.

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26. Then when the magicians gathered, they said to the Pharaoh: "Is there also a reward for us if we become dominant?" He replied: "Yes and at that time you shall also be among the favoured ones."

27. Moses said them: "Present what you want to present." They placed their ropes and sticks and said: "By the Pharaoh's majesty! We alone shall remain dominant."

28. Then Moses placed his staff; thus it suddenly began devouring the spell they were weaving.

29. So, the magicians immediately fell down in prostration. They said: "We have professed faith in the Lord of the worlds, in the Lord of Moses and Aaron."

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قَالَ اٰمَنْتُمْ لَهٗ قَبْلَ اَنْ اٰذَنَ لَكُمْ ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَكَبِيْرُكُمُ الَّذِیْ عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ ۚ فَلَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ لَاُقَطِّعَنَّ اَيْدِيَكُمْ وَ اَرْجُلَكُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ وَّ لَاُوصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿۴۹﴾[30]

In front of everyone, the Pharaoh and his courtiers were utterly humiliated at this defeat. Yet he was not one who would give up easily. To grip matters, he blamed the magicians of the conspiracy the verse mentions. His implication was that the motive behind it was to create a deep impact of Moses (sws) on the masses and pave the way of a revolution. This was high treason and entailed a punishment that is meted out to rebels: he will first have their hands and feet chopped off from alternate sides and then have them hanged to teach them a lesson.

The words "you believed in him before I could give you permission" need to be specially noted. The implication was that if the magicians had really regarded Moses (sws) to be an upright person, as well-wishers, they should have brought this into his knowledge so that he could have decided in the light of this information; however, since this never happened, it is proof enough of the fact that all this drama of victory and defeat was their conspiracy.

قَالُوْا لَا ضَيْرَ ۫ اِنَّاۤ اِلٰى رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُوْنَ ۚ﴿۵۰﴾ اِنَّا نَطْمَعُ اَنْ يَّغْفِرَ لَنَا رَبُّنَا خَطٰيٰنَاۤ اَنْ كُنَّاۤ اَوَّلَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۵۱﴾[31]

The word ضَيْرَ means "harm." And اَنْ كُنَّاۤ is actually لِاَنْ كُنَّاۤ. The ل is suppressed here in accordance with a conventional linguistic principle.

The threat sounded by the Pharaoh was huge but he did not realize that these magicians were not the same ones who had very earnestly requested for a reward; the very first exposure to the radiance of faith had instilled in them the notion that the Pharaoh and his whole kingdom were mere trivia. They fearlessly replied that if they were subjected to this punishment, it will not harm them for they would only return to their Lord; and if he thinks that they are guilty of the punishment of conspiracy because they have taken the initiative in professing faith without his permission, they welcome this punishment because they hope that in reward for taking this initiative, their Lord will forgive all their mistakes.

This indeed could be a cause of great amazement for us that the magicians reached this high status in just one stride; however, in fact, this should not cause any surprise. Jesus (sws) too had said to his unlettered disciples: "When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend

30 He said: "You believed in him before I could give you permission! Indeed, he is your guru who has taught magic to you. So, soon you will come to know. I shall have your limbs severed from alternate sides and crucify all of you."

31. They answered: "No fear! We shall return only to our Lord. We hope that our Lord shall forgive our sins because we are those who first accepted faith."

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yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say." (Luke, 12:11-12)

وَاَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلٰى مُوۡسٰۤى اَنۡ اَسۡرِ بِعِبَادِىۡۤ اِنَّكُمۡ مُّتَّبَعُوۡنَ ﴿۵۲﴾[32]

Before these verses, a part of the anecdote is suppressed. At another instance, I have clarified in the light of both the Qur'ān and the Torah that after being inflicted by defeat, a conflict between Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh ensued for a long time. During this time, many calamities descended on Egypt that brought it to the brink of destruction. Cornered by these calamities, the courtiers advised the Pharaoh to let Moses (sws) take the Israelites wherever he wanted to otherwise the country would be destroyed. Ultimately, the Pharaoh gave this permission but when Moses (sws) set off with them, he changed his opinion. He immediately sent his men to ask all his chiefs with their armies and resources of war to come to him so that the Israelites could be pursued. The verse under discussion alludes to this situation. Moses (sws) should now be on guard that he shall be followed.

فَاَرۡسَلَ فِرۡعَوۡنُ فِى الۡمَدَآئِنِ حٰشِرِيۡنَ ﴿۵۳﴾ اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ لَشِرۡذِمَةٌ قَلِيۡلُوۡنَ ﴿۵۴﴾ وَاِنَّهُمۡ لَنَا لَغَآئِظُوۡنَ ﴿۵۵﴾ وَاِنَّا لَجَمِيۡعٌ حٰذِرُوۡنَ ﴿۵۶﴾[33]

The Pharaoh sent his messengers to all the cities to gather his chiefs and soldiers and in order to encourage the Copts who were deeply over-awed by the feats of Moses (sws) raised the new propaganda cited in these verses. As people who are fully vigilant, they will never give Moses (sws) and his followers a chance to spread disorder in the land or are able to run away from their control.

فَاَخۡرَجۡنٰهُمۡ مِّنۡ جَنّٰتٍ وَّعُيُوۡنٍ ﴿۵۷﴾ وَّكُنُوۡزٍ وَّمَقَامٍ كَرِيۡمٍ ﴿۵۸﴾[34]

The implication of this verse is that God through this plan convinced them to leave their treasured belongings the verses mention so that they end up drowned in the sea with all their resources and armies.

كَذٰلِكَ ؕ وَاَوۡرَثۡنٰهَا بَنِىۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ ﴿۵۹﴾[35]

After the word كَذٰلِكَ words to the effect نَفۡعَلُ بِالۡمُجۡرِمِيۡنَ (thus do We punish the wrongdoers) are suppressed. The emphasis created by this suppression is evident to

32. And We sent a revelation to Moses: "Set off with My servants by night. Indeed, you will be pursued."

33. Thus, the Pharaoh sent summoners in the cities that these are a handful of people and are angering us and we are an alert group.

34. Thus We took them out from orchards, fountains, treasures and from an abode of honour.

35. Thus do We do and We made the Israelites the inheritors of these things.

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those who have a literary appreciation.

The accusative pronoun in اَوۡرَثۡنٰهَا does not refer to precisely the same favours and possessions from which God led out the Copts. It actually refers to those favours and blessings the Israelites acquired in Palestine after setting out from Egypt. Thus in verse 137 of Sūrah al-A'rāf, this is specified in the following words: وَاَوۡرَثۡنَا الۡقَوۡمَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَانُوۡا يُسۡتَضۡعَفُوۡنَ مَشَارِقَ الۡاَرۡضِ وَ مَغَارِبَهَا الَّتِىۡ بٰرَكۡنَا فِيۡهَا (and those who had been oppressed We made them the heirs of the vastness of the east and the west of that land We had blessed). The blessed land referred to in this verse obviously is Palestine. After exiting from Egypt and until the time their wanderings in the desert ended, it was this fertile land that came into the possession of the Israelites. It is not proven from history that they were able to occupy any part of Egypt or areas under its sway.

It is possible that a person may think that artificial effort has been put into determining the antecedent of the pronoun. The apparent meaning of the verse is that the very orchards, fountains and treasures from which the Almighty displaced the Pharaoh and his people were the ones that were given in the possession of the Israelites. However, this objection is not valid. In eloquent Arabic, pronouns occur in this way as well. Many such examples can be seen in the past *sūrahs*. A very clear example is found in the following verse. Muslims have been stopped to ask questions similar to those asked by the Israelites in these words:

قَدۡ سَاَلَهَا قَوۡمٌ مِّنۡ قَبۡلِكُمۡ ثُمَّ اَصۡبَحُوۡا بِهَا كٰفِرِيۡنَ (٥: ١٠٢)

Similar questions were raised by the people of a nation. Then they became their very rejecters because they could not go along with them. (5:102)

It is obvious that the questions to which the pronoun alludes to are not exactly the same questions which the Israelites raised; similar questions are alluded to. Likewise, in the verse under discussion, precisely the same orchards, fountains and treasures are not referred to which are mentioned in the previous verse; the reference is to ones which resemble them which the Israelites were given in Palestine where they migrated from Egypt.

فَاَتۡبَعُوۡهُمۡ مُّشۡرِقِيۡنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ فَلَمَّا تَرَآءَ الۡجَمۡعٰنِ قَالَ اَصۡحٰبُ مُوۡسٰٓى اِنَّا لَمُدۡرَكُوۡنَ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالَ كَلَّا ۚ اِنَّ مَعِىَ رَبِّىۡ سَيَهۡدِيۡنِ ﴿٦٢﴾[36]

Here the anxiety of the Israelites upon seeing the sea is mentioned. In the Torah, it is stated that they started to censure Moses (sws). They said that was there not a place left for their burial that he had brought them out here to be killed. Moses (sws) assured

36. Hence at daybreak these people set out to pursue them. Then when both groups faced each other, the companions of Moses shouted: "We have been seized." Moses said: "Certainly not! My Lord is with me. He shall guide me."

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them and told them that his Lord is with them and will open the way for them. Though the sea is in from of them and the armies of the Pharaoh are behind them and it apparently seems that they are stranded in between, yet God will fulfil His promise. They will not be the slightest harmed. God will show them a marvel of His power and open the way for them. Here is how this incident is mentioned in the Torah:

> When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, "What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!" … The Egyptians—all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, horsemen and troops—pursued the Israelites … As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? … Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still." (Exodus, 14:5-14)

فَاَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلٰى مُوۡسٰۤى اَنِ اضۡرِبۡ بِّعَصَاكَ الۡبَحۡرَ ؕ فَانۡفَلَقَ فَكَانَ كُلُّ فِرۡقٍ كَالطَّوۡدِ الۡعَظِيۡمِ ﴿۶۳﴾ وَ اَزۡلَفۡنَا ثَمَّ الۡاٰخَرِيۡنَ ﴿۶۴﴾ وَ اَنۡجَيۡنَا مُوۡسٰى وَمَنۡ مَّعَهٗۤ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ ﴿۶۵﴾ ثُمَّ اَغۡرَقۡنَا الۡاٰخَرِيۡنَ ﴿۶۶﴾[37]

These verses mention a test regarding the extent of trust Moses (sws) and his nation had in God. Right in accordance with their past ways, the Israelites totally failed in it, but he passed it in flying colours. After this test, the Almighty showed a marvel of His power when He asked Moses (sws) to strike the sea with his staff. He complied. It is evident from the Torah that a tempestuous wind parted the sea into two. A wall of water flanked the bare ground. Moses (sws) traversed it along with the Israelites. God's will brought the Pharaoh and his army to this spot where the sea had parted. They too entered the dry ground with their chariots and horses. After this, the wind that had parted the sea ceased at God's behest. By then, Moses (sws) and his nation had safely reached the shore and water started to level back and the Pharaoh and his followers were faced with the ordeal of drowning. They tried to run back, but it was too late. The whole army was finally drowned. This is how the Torah narrates this incident:

> Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water

37. Thus We sent a revelation to Moses: "Strike your staff on the sea." So it rent asunder and each part became like a huge mountain. And We brought the other group near that place and saved Moses and those who were with him. Then We drowned the others.

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on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea … Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. (Exodus, 14:21-27)

The word "a huge mountain" of the verse refers to the mountain of water. In the Torah, the word "wall" has been used. The view of my mentor, Farāhī, regarding the place where the Israelites crossed into the sea is totally different from the one expressed by the scholars of the People of the Book. He has cited his opinion in his exegesis of Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt. Since I am not aware of his arguments, I cannot say anything about this place with certainty. Researchers can read and benefit from it as it has been published in Urdu as well in *Majmū'ah tafasīr-i Farāhī.*

اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِیْنَ ﴿۶۷﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِیْزُ الرَّحِیْمُ ﴿۶۸﴾[38]

Here at the end, the repetitive verses alluded to earlier are placed. The implication is that if these people want a sign, then this anecdote contains many lessons. However, those who do not use their intellect continue to demand signs. Even after observing the greatest of signs their majority is not inclined to accept faith, just as was the case with the Pharaoh and his people. God can seize such rebellious people whenever He intends to because He is powerful. Yet since He is also merciful, He also gives respite to people to repent and mend their ways.

Section III: Verses (69-104)

In the succeeding verses, the preaching endeavour of Abraham (sws) and the reaction of his nation is mentioned. It ends with the repetitive verses. It is evident from this mention that the purpose of narrating this anecdote is the same as the one intended for the previous one.

An aspect is worthy of special attention: in the previous *sūrah*, Noah (sws) was mentioned after Moses (sws) and no other prophet in between them was mentioned. In the current *sūrah*, this gap has been filled by the mention of Abraham's anecdote. This is because the most prominent messenger between Noah (sws) and Moses (sws) was Abraham (sws).

38. Indeed, there is a great sign in this, and most of them are not going to believe it. And indeed your Lord, He is Mighty and Merciful.

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Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَاَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ﴿٦٩﴾ اِذْ قَالَ لِاَبِيْهِ وَقَوْمِهٖ مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالُوْا نَعْبُدُ اَصْنَامًا فَنَظَلُّ لَهَا
عٰكِفِيْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ قَالَ هَلْ يَسْمَعُوْنَكُمْ اِذْ تَدْعُوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ اَوْ يَنْفَعُوْنَكُمْ اَوْ يَضُرُّوْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ قَالُوْا بَلْ وَجَدْنَآ اٰبَآءَنَا
كَذٰلِكَ يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾ قَالَ اَفَرَءَيْتُمْ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ اَنْتُمْ وَ اٰبَآؤُكُمُ الْاَقْدَمُوْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَاِنَّهُمْ عَدُوٌّ لِّيْٓ
اِلَّا رَبَّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَنِيْ فَهُوَ يَهْدِيْنِ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَالَّذِيْ هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِيْ وَ يَسْقِيْنِ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَ اِذَا مَرِضْتُ
فَهُوَ يَشْفِيْنِ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَالَّذِيْ يُمِيْتُنِيْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيْنِ ﴿٨١﴾ وَالَّذِيْٓ اَطْمَعُ اَنْ يَّغْفِرَ لِيْ خَطِيْٓـَٔتِيْ يَوْمَ الدِّيْنِ ﴿٨٢﴾ رَبِّ
هَبْ لِيْ حُكْمًا وَّ اَلْحِقْنِيْ بِالصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَ اجْعَلْ لِّيْ لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي الْاٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَ اجْعَلْنِيْ مِنْ وَّرَثَةِ
جَنَّةِ النَّعِيْمِ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَاغْفِرْ لِاَبِيْٓ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ مِنَ الضَّآلِّيْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَلَا تُخْزِنِيْ يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَّ لَا
بَنُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ اِلَّا مَنْ اَتَى اللّٰهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيْمٍ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَاُزْلِفَتِ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٩٠﴾ وَبُرِّزَتِ الْجَحِيْمُ لِلْغٰوِيْنَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَقِيْلَ
لَهُمْ اَيْنَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٩٢﴾ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ هَلْ يَنْصُرُوْنَكُمْ اَوْ يَنْتَصِرُوْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾ فَكُبْكِبُوْا فِيْهَا هُمْ وَ
الْغَاوٗنَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَ جُنُوْدُ اِبْلِيْسَ اَجْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾ قَالُوْا وَهُمْ فِيْهَا يَخْتَصِمُوْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾ تَاللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنَّا لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٩٧﴾
اِذْ نُسَوِّيْكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٩٨﴾ وَمَآ اَضَلَّنَآ اِلَّا الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٩٩﴾ فَمَا لَنَا مِنْ شَافِعِيْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ وَلَا صَدِيْقٍ
حَمِيْمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾ فَلَوْ اَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَ
اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾

And narrate to them the anecdote of Abraham when he asked his father and the people of his nation: "What are these things which you people worship?" They replied: "We worship idols and shall continue to diligently adhere to their worship." (69-71)

He said: "Do they listen to you when you call them or benefit or harm you?" They replied: "In fact, we have seen our forefathers doing this." (72-74)

He said: "Then have you ever reflected also on these that you have been worshipping? You also and your earlier forefathers too! All these are my enemies except for God, Lord of the worlds, Who has created me; then it is He Who guides me. And Who makes me eat and drink and when I get sick, cures me, and He who shall give me death; then bring me back to life and from whom I have hope that on the Day of Judgement He shall forgive my sins." (75-82)

"My Lord! Grant me the power of decision-making and include me among the

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righteous and let those who come later continue to fondly remember me and make me among the inheritors of the orchard of blessings and forgive my father; indeed, he was among those who have gone astray. And on the Day people will be raised up, on that Day, do not disgrace me." (83-87)

The Day neither wealth shall be of benefit nor children. Only they shall succeed who come with a pure heart and Paradise shall be brought near those who fear God and Hell shall be exposed for those who have gone astray and they will be asked: "Where are they whom you worshipped besides God? Will they help you or defend themselves?" Thus they also and the people too who have gone astray and the armies of Satan as well, all of them will be cast face down into it. (88-95)

And while arguing among themselves in it, they will say: "By God! We were in open error when we used to make you partners of the Lord of the Universe and we were led astray only by the wrongdoers. So, now there is neither any intercessor for us nor any ardent friend! Grant us one more return that we can become believers!" (96-102)

Indeed, there is a great sign in this and most of them are not going to believe. And your Lord indeed is Mighty and Merciful. (103-104)

Explanation

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَاَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ﴿٦٩﴾ اِذْ قَالَ لِاَبِيْهِ وَقَوْمِهٖ مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالُوْا نَعْبُدُ اَصْنَامًا فَنَظَلُّ لَهَا عٰكِفِيْنَ ﴿٧١﴾[39]

The question posed by Abraham (sws) was not meant to elicit an answer. It was meant to discredit his addressees. He meant that what are these foolish and baseless things they are worshipping. The answer of his people was punctuated by arrogance and by the bias they had for their tribal interests. However much Abraham (sws) may emphasize his call, they will never give up their deities.

قَالَ هَلْ يَسْمَعُوْنَكُمْ اِذْ تَدْعُوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ اَوْ يَنْفَعُوْنَكُمْ اَوْ يَضُرُّوْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ قَالُوْا بَلْ وَجَدْنَآ اٰبَآءَنَا كَذٰلِكَ يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾[40]

Abraham (sws) posed these questions to expose the baseless nature of these idols. Their reply was that they do not have an answer to these questions but will continue to worship them in this way because they are only following the ways of their forefathers, which they will not give up at any cost.

It may be noted that the events cited here are the ones which took place when he had conclusively communicated the truth to his people through both scriptural and intellectual arguments. It will become evident from the succeeding verses that after

39. And narrate to them the anecdote of Abraham when he asked his father and the people of his nation: "What are these things which you people worship?" They replied: "We worship idols and shall continue to diligently adhere to their worship."

40. He said: "Do they listen to you when you call them or benefit or harm you?" They replied: "In fact, we have seen our forefathers doing this."

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that he declared his acquittal and migrated from them. Obviously, the style of preaching of a prophet also changes in this phase. His words are meant to stir the souls and prod the minds of his people and their reaction instead is of ultimate stubbornness and obduracy. Both these aspects are evident from the question and answer cited here.

قَالَ اَفَرَءَيْتُمْ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُوْنَ ۝ اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَآؤُكُمُ الْاَقْدَمُوْنَ ۝ فَاِنَّهُمْ عَدُوٌّ لِّيْٓ اِلَّا رَبَّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝[41]

Here the word اَفَرَءَيْتُمْ is meant to express amazement and distaste pointing to the baselessness of idols Abraham's (sws) nation was worshipping. They are lures of Satan and Satan is an eternal enemy of mankind. His real mission is to stop people from going to the straight path. These words constitute Abraham's declaration of acquittal after which he migrated from his people. In verse 99 of Sūrah Ṣāffāt, it is cited in these words: اِنِّيْ ذَاهِبٌ اِلٰى رَبِّيْ سَيَهْدِيْنِ (I am going to my Lord; He will guide me). A proclamation of this migration is made in verse 26 of Sūrah 'Ankabūt. A prophet of God is a sincere well-wisher of his people. He has great sympathy and concern for them. However, when these people become his enemies and instead of duly valuing the guidance brought by him try to inveigle him into their ill-ways, he regards them to be his enemy and migrates from them. For this reason, Abraham (sws) did not say that he is their enemy; on the contrary, he said that they are his enemy.

الَّذِيْ خَلَقَنِيْ فَهُوَ يَهْدِيْنِ ۝ وَالَّذِيْ هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِيْ وَيَسْقِيْنِ ۝ وَاِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِيْنِ ۝ وَالَّذِيْ يُمِيْتُنِيْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيْنِ ۝ وَالَّذِيْٓ اَطْمَعُ اَنْ يَّغْفِرَ لِيْ خَطِيْٓـَٔتِيْ يَوْمَ الدِّيْنِ ۝[42]

After explaining the baseless nature of his nations' idols, here in these verses, Abraham (sws) has elucidated the attributes of his real Lord – who actually is worthy of worship and obedience. The fact that God created him and guided him is an undeniable reality and also a logical necessity. He has created outstanding abilities in human beings and also given him the tact of developing and using these abilities. He has created them with a noble nature and blessed them with intellect which can distinguish right from wrong. It can deduce principles from components and lead them to derive results from the data they receive from their senses. Thus in verses 2-3 of Sūrah al-A'lā, it is stated: الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ فَسَوّٰى وَالَّذِىْ قَدَّرَ فَهَدٰى (Who created and perfected us and placed potentials in us and guided us in using them). Providing this

41. He said: "Then have you ever reflected also on these that you have been worshipping? You also and your earlier forefathers too!"

42. "All these are my enemies except for God, Lord of the worlds, Who has created me; then it is He Who guides me. And Who makes me eat and drink and when I get sick, cures me, and He who shall give me death; then bring me back to life and from whom I have hope that on the Day of Judgement He shall forgive my sins."

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guidance is a necessary consequence of God's attribute of creation, as just alluded to. The God Who has created human beings with all these provisions and with such wisdom cannot leave them to wander about. This does not behove His mercy and wisdom. It He had done this, creation would not only have been a useless activity, it would have also been injustice which is against His majesty. For this reason, just as He has arranged for all the material needs of human beings, He has also provided for their spiritual needs. Moreover, since the real lofty status they can achieve depends on the fulfilment of this need at the optimum level, He did not leave this matter merely to their intellect. He in fact instituted a system of divine guidance by sending His prophets and messengers to mankind. Thus Abraham (sws) meant that only that being is worthy of worship who is the fountainhead of all these blessings and favours and not those idols carved out from stones that near hear nor see, neither give benefit nor inflict harm.

After mentioning the provisions provided by God for the development of the soul and the intellect, the words "And Who makes me eat and drink and when I get sick, cures me" refer to His provisions regarding physical needs. It may be kept in mind here that polytheistic nations did not regard their deities to be the owners and creators of the universe; they in fact regarded them to be a source of blessings and sustenance. A superstition that specially inflicted them was that disease was a result of their anger and remedy to disease depended on pleasing them. Abraham (sws) has dealt a severe blow on these superstitions of his nation by telling them that they have no role in these things; all of them are in the control of the Lord of the universe. The style "when I get sick, cures me" is also noteworthy. Eating, drinking and curing are directly ascribed to God but becoming sick is ascribed to his own self by Abraham (sws). This is not only in deference to etiquette but also to the fact that, whereas all blessings are from God, hardships faced by people are at times the result of their own doing. Though they too inflict them by God's permission but a person's negligence has also has role in them. Hence they are ascribed to him.

The sentence "and He who shall give me death; then bring me back to life" directs attention to the necessary consequence of providing sustenance and guidance to mankind after creating it. If creating it the first time was no cause of bother to God, how can re-creating it be of any bother. Moreover, this re-creation is an essential consequence of all this elaborate arrangement and providence. How is it possible that He guides and sustains people and then makes their life end with any consequence?

The words "and from whom I have hope that on the Day of Judgement He shall forgive my sins" refer to the manifestation of the Day of Judgement which every person will encounter once he dies. Instead of informing people of its mere arrival, Abraham (sws) expressed his expectation from God when that day arrives. In other words, it is as if its arrival is self-obvious about which there is no doubt; however, everyone must prepare for this event and hope from God that He will forgive those

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who spent their lives in fearing Him.

Here it may be kept in mind that Abraham (sws) has presented all the fundamentals of his preaching in a very logical sequence. However, instead of presenting them through arguments and reasoning, he has expressed them in the form of personal impressions. The reason for this is that they were delivered in the phase of acquittal and migration, as has been indicated. In this phase, addressing people in a way that appeals to their intellect is useless. Thus he employed subtle statements in which personal impressions were reflected hoping that this style may stir their souls. If there is some life left in the hearts, this style at times becomes very potent. Very subtle examples of this style exist in the Qur'ān.

وَاجْعَلْ لِّيْ لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي الْاٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ رَبِّ هَبْ لِيْ حُكْمًا وَّاَلْحِقْنِيْ بِالصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾[43]

This is the prayer Abraham (sws) uttered at this sensitive time of his declaration of acquittal and migration.

The word حُكْم refers to the power of decision-making, as has been discussed under verse 21. Prophets of God are specially blessed with this power. This was the time when Abraham (sws) was about to undertake a very important step of his life and needed God's grace and guidance in future in taking the correct decisions. Thus he began his prayer with these words.

Since he had declared his acquittal from his people for the cause of truth, he also prayed that, instead of these evil people, he is able to live in the company of the righteous both in this world and in the Hereafter. Thus the words: وَّاَلْحِقْنِيْ بِالصّٰلِحِيْنَ.

The word لِسَانَ here means "fame" and "reputation." Since it is annexed to the word صِدْقٍ, the expression لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ would mean "fond remembrance." In fact, an accurate translation would be "everlasting fond remembrance."

Abraham's (sws) prayer here invokes God to grant his message wide and continued acceptance among people. This prayer was accepted in way that has no parallel in history. All the prophets among the Israelites delivered the message he stood for. Finally, Muḥammad, the last of prophet of God, made his message a global and abiding phenomenon.

وَاغْفِرْ لِاَبِيْٓ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ مِنَ الضَّآلِّيْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَلَا تُخْزِنِيْ يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَاجْعَلْنِيْ مِنْ وَّرَثَةِ جَنَّةِ النَّعِيْمِ ﴿٨٥﴾[44]

At the end, Abraham (sws) has prayed for a place in Paradise and for the

43. "My Lord! Grant me the power of decision-making and include me among the righteous and let those who come later continue to fondly remember me."

44. "And make me among the inheritors of the orchard of blessings and forgive my father; indeed, he was among those who have gone astray. And on the Day people will be raised up, on that Day, do not disgrace me."

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forgiveness of his father.

The last of the above quoted verses carries a very strong recommendation from him for his father. The humiliation of a person's relatives especially of his parents is tantamount to his own humiliation. For this reason, Abraham (sws) pleaded to God to forgive his father because if his father ends up in Hell, this would be ultimate humiliation for Abraham (sws). Through these words, Abraham (sws) tried to fulfil his obligation to his father in a very compassionate and benevolent way. However, God's law of justice is totally unbiased. This prayer was not accepted and in fact he was emphatically stopped from praying for him.

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَّ لَا بَنُوْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾ اِلَّا مَنْ اَتَى اللّٰهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيْمٍ ﴿۸۹﴾[45]

These words are not part of Abraham's prayer. They are in fact from God Himself and complete and explain the prayer. If a child can be of any benefit to his parent, Āzar would have been the most fortunate. God had blessed with him with a son as Abraham (sws). However, if a son of the stature of Abraham (sws) cannot be of benefit to his father, what to speak of others! The expression "pure heart" refers to a heart that is completely devoid of any speck of polytheism and hypocrisy. A heart inflicted with these ailments has no weight before God.

وَ اُزْلِفَتِ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۹۰﴾ وَ بُرِّزَتِ الْجَحِيْمُ لِلْغٰوِيْنَ ﴿۹۱﴾[46]

The word اِزْلَافٌ means "to bring near." Thus the first verse refers to the honour and respect that will be bestowed on the pious: Paradise will be brought to them the way an offers is presented in its material form. It will already be embellished and decorated in return for the good deeds they did in the previous world. They will not have to travel to reach it; it will be brought near them. In the same way, Hell too will be ready. The only thing needed on the Day of Judgement would be its unveiling. Something that people regarded far-fetched and had become indifferent to would be right before them.

وَ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ اَيْنَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿۹۲﴾ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ هَلْ يَنْصُرُوْنَكُمْ اَوْ يَنْتَصِرُوْنَ ﴿۹۳﴾[47]

The word نَصْرٌ means "to help someone," and اِنْتِصَارٌ means "to defend one's self."

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45. The Day neither wealth shall be of benefit nor children. Only they shall succeed who come with a pure heart.

46. And Paradise shall be brought near those who fear God and Hell shall be exposed for those who have gone astray.

47. And they will be asked: "Where are they whom you worshipped besides God? Will they help you or defend themselves?"

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فَكُبْكِبُوْا فِيْهَا هُمْ وَالْغَاوٗنَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَجُنُوْدُ اِبْلِيْسَ اَجْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾[48]

The word كَبٌّ means "to throw someone face wards." The word addition of letters have transformed it into كَبْكَبَ and thereby incorporated emphasis in it.

قَالُوْا وَهُمْ فِيْهَا يَخْتَصِمُوْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾ تَاللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنَّا لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٩٧﴾ اِذْ نُسَوِّيْكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٩٨﴾[49]

The word اِخْتِصَامٌ means "mutual altercation." At other instances in the Qur'ān, it is specified that this altercation will take place between the leaders of polytheism and disbelief and between their followers. The latter will tell the former that it was because of following them that they had encountered this evil day; so they should lessen this scourge for them. The leaders will reply that they just made them follow what they themselves followed and it was their misfortune that they had followed them. This altercation is referred rather briefly in the verses under discussion: the followers will cry out on oath in utter disappointment that they by regarding these leaders as partners of God had gone far astray. While explaining the verses Ibn Kathīr writes: نجعل أمركم مطاعا كما يطاع أمر رب العالمين (we obeyed your directives the way we should have obeyed the directives of the God of the Universe).[50]

Here it needs to be kept in mind that the beings whether they were the angels or the jinn that the Idolaters worshipped were all imaginary. So, any question or answer with them is out of question. On the Day of Judgement, it will become evident to the Idolaters that these are merely names kept by them which have no existence in reality. However, those who began this worship and turned people away from God to these idols and rejected God's messengers in their support and honour will be present there. It is they who would be addressed by the followers in the words mentioned by these verses.

وَمَآ اَضَلَّنَآ اِلَّا الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٩٩﴾ فَمَا لَنَا مِنْ شَافِعِيْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ وَلَا صَدِيْقٍ حَمِيْمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾ فَلَوْ اَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾[51]

The previous verses depict what the followers will say to their leaders. What is mentioned in these verses will be longingly uttered by them as a rebuke to their own selves. Concomitant indications show that the word "wrongdoers" will be used by them for their leaders.

The words "So, now there is neither any intercessor for us nor any ardent friend," express sorrow and yearning."

48. Thus they also and the people too who have gone astray and the armies of Satan as well, all of them will be cast face down into it.

49. And while arguing among themselves in it, they will say: "By God! We were in open error when we used to make you partners of the Lord of the universe."

50. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 3, 341.

51. "And we were led astray only by the wrongdoers. So, now there is neither any intercessor for us nor any ardent friend! Grant us one more return that we can become believers!"

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The words "Grant us one more return that we can become believers!" express their ardent desire, which of course will not be granted. Its time will stand expired.

These verses warn those who spend their lives blindly following their leaders and forefathers that this excuse will not be entertained from them on the Day of Judgement that they were misled by others; everyone person will be answerable for his own deeds.

اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِیْنَ ﴿۱۰۳﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِیْزُ الرَّحِیْمُ ﴿۱۰۴﴾[52]

These repetitive verses have already been explained earlier.

Section IV: Verses (105-122)

In this section, the anecdote of Noah is covered. His message to his nation, their rejection and as a consequence encountering punishment are mentioned. The section ends on the repetitive verses.

Readers may now study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ نُوْحِ ِۨالْمُرْسَلِیْنَ ﴿۱۰۵﴾ اِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ اَخُوْهُمْ نُوْحٌ اَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۶﴾ اِنِّیْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِیْنٌ ﴿۱۰۷﴾ فَاتَّقُوا
اللّٰهَ وَاَطِیْعُوْنِ ﴿۱۰۸﴾ وَمَاۤ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَیْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِیَ اِلَّا عَلٰی رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ ﴿۱۰۹﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ
اَطِیْعُوْنِ ﴿۱۱۰﴾ قَالُوْۤا اَنُؤْمِنُ لَكَ وَاتَّبَعَكَ الْاَرْذَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۱﴾ قَالَ وَمَا عِلْمِیْ بِمَا كَانُوْا یَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۲﴾ اِنْ حِسَابُهُمْ
اِلَّا عَلٰی رَبِّیْ لَوْ تَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۳﴾ وَمَاۤ اَنَا بِطَارِدِ الْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ ﴿۱۱۴﴾ اِنْ اَنَا اِلَّا نَذِیْرٌ مُّبِیْنٌ ﴿۱۱۵﴾ قَالُوْا لَىِٕنْ لَّمْ تَنْتَهِ
یٰنُوْحُ لَتَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمَرْجُوْمِیْنَ ﴿۱۱۶﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اِنَّ قَوْمِیْ كَذَّبُوْنِ ﴿۱۱۷﴾ فَافْتَحْ بَیْنِیْ وَبَیْنَهُمْ فَتْحًا وَّنَجِّنِیْ وَمَنْ
مَّعِیَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ ﴿۱۱۸﴾ فَاَنْجَیْنٰهُ وَمَنْ مَّعَهٗ فِی الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُوْنِ ﴿۱۱۹﴾ ثُمَّ اَغْرَقْنَا بَعْدُ الْبٰقِیْنَ ﴿۱۲۰﴾ اِنَّ فِیْ
ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِیْنَ ﴿۱۲۱﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِیْزُ الرَّحِیْمُ ﴿۱۲۲﴾

The nation of Noah also similarly denied the messengers when their brother Noah informed them: "Do you people not have fear? I am for you a trusted messenger. So, fear God and obey me. And I do not ask you for any recompense on this. My recompense rests with the Lord of the worlds. Hence, fear God and obey me." They replied: "Should we believe in you even though the lowly have followed you." Noah

52. Indeed, there is a great sign in this and most of them are not going to believe. And your Lord indeed is Mighty and Merciful.

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replied: "What do I know of what they have been doing? Their account rests with my Lord if you want to understand! And I am not going to forsake the believers. I am only an open warner." (105-115)

They said: "Noah! If you do not desist, you will surely be stoned to death." (116)

He prayed: "Lord! My nation has rejected me; so, now deliver a clear judgement between me and them, and deliver me and the believers who are with me." Thus, We saved him and his companions in a laden ship. Then after this, We drowned the rest. (117-120)

Indeed, there is a great sign in this; and most among them are not going to believe. And your Lord, indeed, is Mighty and Merciful. (121-122)

Explanation

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ نُوْحِ ِۨالْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾[53]

The people of Noah (sws) had only denied one messenger: Noah (sws). However, the plural "messengers" is used. It has been explained at another instance that the real basis of acceptance or rejection is the mentality of people. All messengers presented the same message to their people as the one Noah presented (sws). Thus if they rejected Noah's message, it was as if they rejected the message of every messenger. It is evident from this that just as the message of every messenger remained the same, the mentality of those who denied them also remained the same. And then all met the same fate as well. Abraham's anecdote has been mentioned here to point to this fact so that those were rejecting Prophet Muḥammad (sws) learn a lesson from it.

اِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ اَخُوْهُمْ نُوْحٌ اَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿١٠٧﴾[54]

The expression "Do you people not have fear?" carries an element of warning in it. The mention of Noah (sws) as a trusted messenger points to fact that he is not a fabricator or a false claimant, as his people reckon. In fact, as God's messenger, with full honesty he is presenting them what God is asking him to.

فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿١٠٨﴾[55]

The verse implies that if these people want to be secure from God's scourge, they should give up their rebelliousness and obduracy and fear the grasp of God. The way to do this is to obey Noah (sws) and stop following these rebellious people who were leading them to destruction.

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53. The nation of Noah also similarly denied the messengers.

54. When their brother Noah informed them: "Do you people not have fear? I am for you a trusted messenger."

55. "So, fear God and obey me."

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وَمَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلٰي رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿١١٠﴾[56]

In these verses, the addressees are urged to reflect on the reality and at the same time, they inform them of Noah's self-sufficient position in their matter. The implication is that he is presenting his message to them out of his concern for them and does not have any monetary benefit attached to this endeavour, lest they do not listen to him because of this worry. If they listen to him, it will be to their own advantage. His recompense rests with God Who will not deprive him from it whether they listen to him or not. So his assertion once again is to listen to him in order to secure themselves from the wrath of God.

قَالُوْٓا اَنُؤْمِنُ لَكَ وَاتَّبَعَكَ الْاَرْذَلُوْنَ ﴿١١١﴾[57]

This is the reply of his arrogant nation in response to Noah's (sws) sincere and earnest advice. They said that how could they sit in the same place with the lowly and meek who have accepted Noah's (sws) call. Their implication was that Noah (sws) should make a choice. If he wants them to come near him, then he should first discard these lowly ones. It is evident from this response of his nation that these arrogant people had nothing to say to deny Noah's (sws) message and call. But they did not want to accept defeat in any way. So, in the end, they found a lame excuse for them to satisfy their arrogance.

قَالَ وَمَا عِلْمِيْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١١٢﴾ اِنْ حِسَابُهُمْ اِلَّا عَلٰي رَبِّيْ لَوْ تَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَمَآ اَنَا بِطَارِدِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١١٤﴾ اِنْ اَنَا اِلَّا نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١١٥﴾[58]

The answer given by Noah (sws) in these verses is very subtle: whether a person is of high status or low depends on his character and not on his family and lineage; he is unaware of their past deeds and they will be answerable for them to God; as for the present, they have professed faith in God and fear Him.

The words "if you want to understand" imply that if these people knew that a person's status is not determined by his wealth and status but by his conduct, they would have said what Noah (sws) is saying. This arrogant notion has become a hindrance for them to accept the truth.

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56. "And I do not ask you for any recompense on this. My recompense rests with the Lord of the worlds. Hence, fear God and obey me."

57. They replied: "Should we believe in you even though the lowly have followed you."

58. Noah replied: "What do I know of what they have been doing? Their account rests with my Lord if you want to understand! And I am not going to forsake the believers. I am only an open warner."

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Noah (sws) went on to say that if these people will believe on the condition that he abandons these people, then this is not going to happen. As an open warner, he has discharged his responsibility. He who does not accept faith will alone be responsible for this lapse.

قَالُوْا لَئِنْ لَّمْ تَنْتَهِ يٰنُوْحُ لَتَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمَرْجُوْمِيْنَ ﴿١١٦﴾[59]

It is clearly evident from the words of this verse that earlier on too they had threatened to stone Noah (sws) to death but he ignored them. Finally, they emphatically gave their verdict that this is not merely a threat. It is bound to materialize.

قَالَ رَبِّ اِنَّ قَوْمِيْ كَذَّبُوْنِ ﴿١١٧﴾ فَافْتَحْ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ فَتْحًا وَّنَجِّنِيْ وَمَنْ مَّعِيَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾[60]

After this decisive declaration by the nation, when Noah (sws) totally lost hope in they professing faith, he supplicated to God in these words in accordance with the well-known practice of messengers. The emphasis sounded by the word فَتْحًا shows that Noah (sws) supplicated for the victory and help that necessarily culminates in the destruction of a nation which as denied its messenger and in the deliverance of his companions.

فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَمَنْ مَّعَهٗ فِي الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُوْنِ ﴿١١٩﴾ ثُمَّ اَغْرَقْنَا بَعْدُ الْبٰقِيْنَ ﴿١٢٠﴾[61]

Since Noah's (sws) supplication was uttered at the right time, it was immediately accepted. The punishment which God had threatened his nation with materialized in the form of a storm which drowned everyone except him and his followers.

Consider the expression: الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُوْنِ. The word شحن means "to fill something." Here it qualifies the ship and refers to things which Noah (sws) was directed to place in it, as has been discussed in detail at other instances. This ship was built at the behest of God such that it had all the necessary things to save its passengers from the storm. Thus it was filled with all these things, and the remaining ones were left to drown.

اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٢١﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٢٢﴾[62]

These repetitive verses at the end have already been explained. The implication is that if these people want a sign, then a great sign exists in this great anecdote of

59. They said: "Noah! If you do not desist, you will surely be stoned to death."

60. He prayed: "Lord! My nation has rejected me; so, now deliver a clear judgement between me and them, and deliver me and the believers who are with me."

61. Thus, We saved him and his companions in a laden ship. Then after this, We drowned the rest.

62. Indeed, there is a great sign in this; and most among them are not going to believe. And your Lord, indeed, is Mighty and Merciful.

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history. However, these are obdurate and stubborn people who find excuse to evade faith. Their majority will not accept faith even after observing the greatest of signs. Prophet Muḥammad's Lord can seize his rejecters anytime because He is dominant. However, He is giving them respite since He is also merciful.

Section V: Verses (123-140)

Readers may remember that in this previous *sūrah*, two celebrated prophets of God – Moses (sws) and Noah (sws) – were mentioned in detail while the nations that came between them were only briefly referred to. In this *sūrah*, details of these nations are mentioned in the succeeding verses. How they dealt with their messengers and what fate they ultimately met is alluded to. The sequence adopted is historical and at the end of every anecdote the repetitive verses occur.

Foremost, the nation of 'Ād is mentioned in the following words:

Text and Translation

كَذَّبَتْ عَادُ ۨ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ اِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ اَخُوْهُمْ هُوْدٌ اَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿١٢٥﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ
وَ اَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿١٢٦﴾ وَ مَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ اَتَبْنُوْنَ بِكُلِّ رِيْعٍ اٰيَةً
تَعْبَثُوْنَ ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَ تَتَّخِذُوْنَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُوْنَ ﴿١٢٩﴾ وَ اِذَا بَطَشْتُمْ بَطَشْتُمْ جَبَّارِيْنَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ
اَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَ اتَّقُوا الَّذِيْٓ اَمَدَّكُمْ بِمَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٣٢﴾ اَمَدَّكُمْ بِاَنْعَامٍ وَّ بَنِيْنَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ وَ جَنّٰتٍ وَّ عُيُوْنٍ ﴿١٣٤﴾
اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿١٣٥﴾ قَالُوْا سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْنَآ اَوَعَظْتَ اَمْ لَمْ تَكُنْ مِّنَ الْوٰعِظِيْنَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ اِنْ هٰذَآ
اِلَّا خُلُقُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَ مَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِيْنَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَاَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ ۭ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ۭ وَ مَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ
مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ وَ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٤٠﴾

The nation of 'Ād denied the messengers when their brother Hūd informed them: "Do you people not fear? I am a trusted messenger for you. So, fear God and obey me. And I do not ask you for any recompense on this. My recompense rests only with God, Lord of the worlds. (123-127)

Will you keep building useless memorials on every high ground and keep constructing large palaces as if you have to live here forever? And when you attack someone you attack as tyrants do? So, fear God and obey me. And fear the God Who has helped you with things which you know. He helped you with animals, children,

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orchards and fountains. Indeed, I fear for you the torment of a horrible day." (128-135)

They replied: "It is equal for us whether you counsel us or do not be among those who counsel. This is only something that is being handed down from the past and certainly, no torment is going to visit us." So, they rejected him. Thus We destroyed them. Indeed, there is a great sign in this, and most of them are not going to believe. And your Lord indeed is Mighty and Merciful. (136-140)

Explanation

كَذَّبَتْ عَادُ ۨ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ اِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ اَخُوْهُمْ هُوْدٌ اَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿١٢٥﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ اَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿١٢٦﴾[63]

The word "messengers" occurs in the plural for the reason stated in verse 105. Denying one messenger of God is tantamount to denying all. For this very reason, the Qur'ān did not accept the claim to faith made by the People of the Book and regarded them to be ones who discriminate between God's messengers. All messengers come with the same message, and he who denies one of them is one who denies all.

The verse says that Hūd (sws) was their brother and not a stranger to them. His past and present was not hidden from them. He lived among them all his life and that too in an impeccable way. If they regard him to be a liar and a fabricator, it can only be regarded as their utter misfortune.

وَمَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾[64]

The element of exhortation found in this verse has already been referred to. Moreover, it also carries rebuke for those who were evading the calls of Prophet Hūd (sws) and were not even prepared to listen to him. They are told that what he is presenting to them is not going to cost them anything. It is free of charge.

اَتَبْنُوْنَ بِكُلِّ رِيْعٍ اٰيَةً تَعْبَثُوْنَ ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَ تَتَّخِذُوْنَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُوْنَ ﴿١٢٩﴾[65]

The word رِيْع means a high ground that can be spotted from afar.

The word اٰيَة here refers to a sign or a monument.

The word مَصَانِع is used for palaces, castles and large structures.

In eloquent Arabic, the word لَعَلَّكُمْ also connotes "as if."

In these verses, Prophet Hūd (sws) has warned his nation that houses and buildings

63. The nation of 'Ād denied the messengers when their brother Hūd informed them: "Do you people not fear? I am a trusted messenger for you. So, fear God and obey me."

64. "And I do not ask you for any recompense on this. My recompense rests only with God, Lord of the worlds."

65. "Will you keep building useless memorials on every high ground and keep constructing large palaces as if you have to live here forever?"

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should be constructed to fulfil needs and not to show off and boast about. Such is their frenzy for construction that every rich person among them is after building a memorial on high ground which boasts of his wealth or builds a house for his entertainment. They are so engrossed in this work as if they think that they are going to live in them forever. They regard a passageway to be their destination and have directed all their attention to feats and marvels of construction. They have forgotten that their real destination lies ahead and needs some preparation too.

Prophet Hūd (sws) was obviously addressing the leaders of his nation by these words. When the Hereafter is disregarded and all attention is focused on this world, society and civilization exhibit wrong priorities. People who have resources embark on a spree to build for themselves one house after another and would not like to leave any place of note to be without a grand memorial for themselves. On the other hand is the sorry state of affairs that there are no shelters for thousands and thousands of poor people and they are left to rot and die right in front of these majestic memorials because of the chill of winter or the heat of summer.

The reason for this disorder first of all is that before fulfilling essential needs of the poor, people take to competing among one another in luxurious and lavish living. Hūd (sws) has pointed out two causes of this disorder: first of them is the desire to build useless buildings as a sign of show and pomp and the second is the desire to live forever.

These causes are equally applicable to our own nation as well. I will *insha'Allah* shed more light on useful and useless feats of construction in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Naml.

وَإِذَا بَطَشْتُمْ بَطَشْتُمْ جَبَّارِينَ ﴿١٣٠﴾[66]

The previous verse depicted the inner disorder of Hūd's people and this one alludes to their external disorder which they spread in the land. If a war is waged merely to display a nation's power and grandeur and to subjugate others, then this is spreading disorder in the land. This is only allowed when the purpose is to check and curb evil. In this case, it is undoubtedly a great virtue; in fact, it is an act of worship. The *jihād* waged by the righteous have always been either for defence or to root out persecution. Both these categories constitute supporting the truth and making the word of God prevail upon others.

In other words, in this verse Hūd (sws) has warned people that their wars are meant to enslave and subjugate other people and this is nothing less than creating disorder in the land.

66. "And when you attack someone you attack as tyrants do?"

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فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ اَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿۱۳۱﴾ وَ اتَّقُوا الَّذِيْٓ اَمَدَّكُمْ بِمَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۲﴾ اَمَدَّكُمْ بِاَنْعَامٍ وَّ بَنِيْنَ ﴿۱۳۳﴾ وَ جَنّٰتٍ وَّ عُيُوْنٍ ﴿۱۳۴﴾ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿۱۳۵﴾[67]

The first of the above cited verses occurs in the Qur'ān from the tongue of almost every messenger of God. These words serve to remind and caution the nation in a very earnest and affectionate way in the last phase. They are told that they have time even now; they should give up their ill-ways and instead of following their mischievous leaders they should follow Hūd (sws).

The words "And fear the God Who has helped you with things which you know" are meant to warn his nation with regard to God's favours instead of His power and majesty. The implication is that the prophet Hūd (sws) is not going to recount before them God's favours that they have in the form of wealth, children, orchards and fountains because they are observing them from their very eyes. These favours have not been given to them so that they end up being indifferent to the Hereafter and show tyranny in the land. They are blessed with them so that they show gratitude to God and lead their lives in His obedience. They should remember that a horrible day of punishment is hovering over them. This refers to the punishment that necessarily visits a nation guilty of denying its messenger.

People who have a true comprehension of God fear His favours more than His trials lest they are not able to fulfil their obligation towards these favours and they actually lead them to indifference. However, very few people know this secret of God.

قَالُوْا سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْنَآ اَوَعَظْتَ اَمْ لَمْ تَكُنْ مِّنَ الْوٰعِظِيْنَ ﴿۱۳۶﴾[68]

The affectionate and earnest counsels of reminder sounded by Hūd (sws) were met with mockery. If the words "or do not be among those who counsel" are deliberated upon, it becomes evident that they too conceal a kind of sarcasm in them. The implication is that they do not even consider his concern for their future of any weight, let alone acceding to his message. They regard this to be madness on his part. It may be kept in mind that at times if a person ignores the counsels of a well-wisher, he still values his concern and sympathy. He in fact wants to be counselled whether he pays heed to it or not. However, this is extreme hard-heartedness that a person not only rejects such counsels but also disregards the concern and sympathy of a well-wisher. Hūd's nation adopted this latter attitude and utterly snubbed him.

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67. "So, fear God and obey me. And fear the God Who has helped you with things which you know. He helped you with animals, children, orchards and fountains. Indeed, I fear for you the torment of a horrible day."

68. They replied: "It is equal for us whether you counsel us or do not be among those who counsel."

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اِنۡ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا خُلُقُ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ﴿۱۳۷﴾ وَمَا نَحۡنُ بِمُعَذَّبِيۡنَ ﴿۱۳۸﴾[69]

They commented that this threat of punishment is nothing new. It has also been sounded in the past at various instances and is totally a bluff. Neither did any punishment visit him in the past nor will it do so in the future. Their implication was that superstitious individuals like Hūd (sws) have made similar statements before him too and they are not going to be intimidated by these speculations. This is also stated in verse 83 of Sūrah al-Mu'minūn and in verse 68 of Sūrah al-Naml it is similarly stated thus: لَقَدۡ وُعِدۡنَا هٰذَا نَحۡنُ وَاٰبَآؤُنَا مِنۡ قَبۡلُ اِنۡ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اَسَاطِيۡرُ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ (we have also been threatened of it and before us our forefathers too; these are only tales of the ancients).

It may be kept in mind that there has never existed a period in this world when the warners have not warned negligent people of worldly as well as next-worldly punishment. Yet the negligent always adopted the attitude adopted by the nation of Hūd (sws). They regarded the next-worldly punishment to be a hoax because it was repeatedly mentioned to them but it never came. They thus concluded that it will neither come nor was supposed to come.

Similarly, worldly punishments that visited nations could not be a source of reminder to them. Intellectuals of their time regarded them to be the vicissitudes of time that happen to nations. They have no bearing to their faith and beliefs.

فَكَذَّبُوۡهُ فَاَهۡلَكۡنٰهُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكۡثَرُهُمۡ مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿۱۳۹﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الرَّحِيۡمُ ﴿۱۴۰﴾[70]

The repetitive verses carry assurance for the Prophet (sws) and warning for his addressees. If they need a sign, then this prominent anecdote of the past is a great sign. However, these people are trying to find lame excuses to evade faith. People who adopt this attitude are given a certain respite according to God's established practice but can never escape His grasp.

Section VI: Verses (141-159)

Coming up is the account of Prophet Ṣāliḥ (sws) and his nation Thamūd. It ends on the repetitive verses. The similarity of the message of prophets of God is evident from

69. "This is only something that is being handed down from the past and certainly, no torment is going to visit us."

70. So, they rejected him. Thus We destroyed them. Indeed, there is a great sign in this, and most of them are not going to believe. And your Lord indeed is Mighty and Merciful.

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this account and so is the response and fate of their respective nations. The Quraysh too are now guilty of the same attitude with their messenger. So how can their fate be different!

Readers may proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُوْدُ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿١٤١﴾ اِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ اَخُوْهُمْ صٰلِحٌ اَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٤٢﴾ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿١٤٣﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ
اَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿١٤٤﴾ وَمَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٤٥﴾ اَتُتْرَكُوْنَ فِيْ مَا هٰهُنَآ اٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٤٦﴾
فِيْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّعُيُوْنٍ ﴿١٤٧﴾ وَّزُرُوْعٍ وَّنَخْلٍ طَلْعُهَا هَضِيْمٌ ﴿١٤٨﴾ وَتَنْحِتُوْنَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوْتًا فٰرِهِيْنَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ
اَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿١٥٠﴾ وَلَا تُطِيْعُوْٓا اَمْرَ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿١٥١﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يُفْسِدُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٥٢﴾ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مِنَ
الْمُسَحَّرِيْنَ ﴿١٥٣﴾ مَآ اَنْتَ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا ۖ فَاْتِ بِاٰيَةٍ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١٥٤﴾ قَالَ هٰذِهٖ نَاقَةٌ لَّهَا شِرْبٌ وَّلَكُمْ
شِرْبُ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ ﴿١٥٥﴾ وَلَا تَمَسُّوْهَا بِسُوْٓءٍ فَيَاْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿١٥٦﴾ فَعَقَرُوْهَا فَاَصْبَحُوْا نٰدِمِيْنَ ﴿١٥٧﴾
فَاَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ۭ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ۭ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٥٩﴾

The Thamūd also denied the messengers when their brother Ṣāliḥ warned them: "Do you people have no fear of God? I am for you a trusted messenger. So, fear God and obey me. And I do not demand any recompense on this from you. My recompense rests with the Lord of the worlds." (141-145)

Will you be left to dwell here among these favours secure from every danger? Amid orchards, springs, cultivated lands and date palms whose bunches are closely-knit? And continue to happily carve out houses in mountains? So, fear God and obey me and do not listen to those who exceed limits who spread disorder in the land and do not mend affairs." (146-152)

They said: "You only seem to be a person under the influence of magic. You are but a human being like us. So, bring a sign if you are truthful." (153-154)

He said: "This is a she-camel. One day, it will be her turn to drink water and another turn of a fixed day is for you. And do not harm it otherwise the torment of a horrible day shall seize you." Thus they slew her. So, they were left to regret. Ultimately, the torment seized them. Indeed, there is a great sign in this and most of them are not going to believe. And indeed your Lord is Mighty and Merciful. (155-159)

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Explanation

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُوْدُ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿١٤١﴾ اِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ اَخُوْهُمْ صٰلِحٌ اَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٤٢﴾ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿١٤٣﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿١٤٤﴾[71]

Precisely these verses have been mentioned at end of the last anecdote and they have been explained there. Ṣāliḥ (sws) said that he is not a false prophet and is not bluffing them. He is God's trustworthy messenger and faithfully delivering them His message.

The words "so, fear God and obey me" sound a warning to these people. They should not be lured away by their deviant leaders. If they do not fear God and obey him, they should remember that the horrific day he informing them of is not far away.

وَمَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٤٥﴾[72]

The various aspects of exhortation and lack of personal gain found in this verse have already been alluded to earlier. Lack of personal gain is an important condition for public welfare. Though no one can shut the mouths of people, prophets of God have openly expressed this sentiment. It is not that they have come to take something from them; on the contrary, they have come to give them something. This is indeed a very difficult proposition to undertake but it is a fact that the message of truth has spread far and wide in this world because of such selfless people.

اَتُتْرَكُوْنَ فِيْ مَا هٰهُنَآ اٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ فِيْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّ عُيُوْنٍ ﴿١٤٧﴾ وَّ زُرُوْعٍ وَّ نَخْلٍ طَلْعُهَا هَضِيْمٌ ﴿١٤٨﴾ وَتَنْحِتُوْنَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوْتًا فٰرِهِيْنَ ﴿١٤٩﴾[73]

The earlier verses formed the introductory part of Ṣāliḥ's message. In these verses, he has informed his people of the real danger that was hovering above them. Worldly successes had blinded them from seeing it. They regarded their opulence and riches as their real assets. Ṣāliḥ (sws) warned them that this apparent prosperity is fooling them; it is in fact an alarm for sudden death. It has been explained in the anecdote of Hūd (sws) earlier that if people do not show gratitude on the favours given to them, they are given respite which they think is good for them. However, this temporary calm culminates in a horrific storm that destroys them. Ṣāliḥ (sws) also directed their attention to this reality and it is clearly evident from his words that this was done

71. The Thamūd also denied the messengers when their brother Ṣāliḥ warned them: "Do you people have no fear of God? I am for you a trusted messenger. So, fear God and obey me."

72. "And I do not demand any recompense on this from you. My recompense rests with the Lord of the worlds."

73. "Will you be left to dwell here among these favours secure from every danger? Amid orchards, springs, cultivated lands and date palms whose bunches are closely-knit? And continue to happily carve out houses in mountains?"

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when his people were at the pinnacle of their development.

The words فِيْ مَا هٰهُنَا refer to the state of prosperity of his people. Succeeding words explain it. If favours make a person indifferent, then this shows how thick-headed he is. Each favour entails gratitude to God and an essential requisite of this gratitude is that he should continue to remain vigilant lest negligence overcomes him. Favours are not rights of people. They are entrusted to them by the Giver. The more a person is entrusted with, the more he must show vigilance. Very foolish is the person who lulls himself to sleep after receiving favours, thinking that this is his right and he has been born to enjoy them. If a person is heedless (اٰمِنِيْنَ) regarding his obligation towards these favours, he falls to death in the well he digs for his use. The Qur’ān has argued at a number of instances in favour of the Hereafter on the basis of God’s providence. There too the objective is the same. Every privilege necessitates accountability. A person’s intellect and nature bears witness to this. Only that person can deny this evidence whose nature has been perverted and whose intellect has left him.

The words طَلْعُهَا هَضِيْمٌ refer to bunches of grapes that are closely-knit and intertwined.

I have explained at other instances in this exegesis that to the Arabs the most cherished orchard was one which had grapes and pomegranates with canals flowing beneath it; in the middle should consist of sections of various cultivated crops and there should be a thick growth of date palms on the borders. Here in the verse under discussion, these components are individually pointed to and the question posed: do these people think that the owner of this orchard will remain aloof and not hold them accountable for these favours He has blessed them with? It may be kept in mind that his reality is explained repeatedly in the Gospels.

The word فَرِهٌ means “to be happy, engrossed and arrogant.” This state is the essential consequence of someone who is not far-sighted or futuristic. This is also one manifestation of the word اٰمِنِيْنَ mentioned earlier. This word is also mentioned in verse 82 of Sūrah al-Ḥijr in the same connotation.

It is evident from history that the Thamūd had attained great heights in carving out buildings from rocky structures and mountains. The affluent among them would carve out edifices and castles from them. This proclivity was the result of outdoing one another in superiority, just as was the case with the ‘Ād. The word فٰرِهِيْنَ points to this tendency they had. Spending wealth in an exorbitant way to express superiority is due to indifference to God and the Hereafter. The society that comes into being as a result does not care about the welfare of people. For this reason, such societies are short-lived in the timeline of God’s laws. Very soon it is transformed into ruins. Ṣāliḥ (sws) informed his nation of this danger. He told them these structures they are building will not remain forever. Their respite is about to end.

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فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿۱۵۰﴾ وَلَا تُطِيْعُوْٓا اَمْرَ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿۱۵۱﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يُفْسِدُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۲﴾[74]

This is the same warning that was sounded in verse 144 earlier. Ṣāliḥ (sws) once again told them that they still have time. They should fear God and obey him. He openly told them to not be lured away by their leaders. Though they claim to be reformers and reforming is their responsibility too, yet they are spreading disorder instead. It has been explained in Sūrah al-Baqarah that just as the continued peaceful existence of this Universe depends on the fact that it is governed by a single intention, similarly, the smooth functioning of the earth depends on governance through the law of one God. If any other law is made to govern the earth, then this would end up in disrupting justice in it even though it may have a grand name and is implemented with sincere intentions.

قَالُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِيْنَ ﴿۱۵۳﴾ مَآ اَنْتَ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا ۖ فَاْتِ بِاٰيَةٍ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۱۵۴﴾[75]

The word مُسَحَّرٌ carries more emphasis and exaggeration than مَسْحُوْرٌ. Ṣāliḥ's nation rebuked him for his earnest reminders and dubbed him a crazy fanatic who was overreacting to their advancement and development and regarding it be a cause of danger. They contented that what is something special about him that they should regard him to be God's messenger and abandon all their efforts for advancement merely because of his warnings. If God wanted to send a messenger, why would He send a human being like them? Why did He not send an angel or a superhuman for this purpose? They regard him to be a liar and boaster unless he brings to them a sign of divine appointment. If he brings such a sign, they will believe his warnings.

قَالَ هٰذِهٖ نَاقَةٌ لَّهَا شِرْبٌ وَّلَكُمْ شِرْبُ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ ﴿۱۵۵﴾ وَلَا تَمَسُّوْهَا بِسُوْٓءٍ فَيَاْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿۱۵۶﴾[76]

These verses describe the sign presented by Ṣāliḥ (sws) after his people give him their final answer. The she-camel mentioned may have belonged to him. It seems evident from these verses that the place of drinking water was the same for everyone. By apportioning time, Ṣāliḥ made this means of severe trial so that the foolhardiness of his nation is fully exposed. The purpose was to judge that if in spite of this warning, his people are audacious enough to harm the she-camel, then they will not refrain from harming even himself. When a nation's rebelliousness reaches this stage in the

74. "So, fear God and obey me and do not listen to those who exceed limits who spread disorder in the land and do not mend affairs."

75. They said: "You only seem to be a person under the influence of magic. You are but a human being like us. So, bring a sign if you are truthful."

76. He said: "This is a she-camel. One day, it will be her turn to drink water and another turn of a fixed day is for you. And do not harm it otherwise the torment of a horrible day shall seize you."

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matter of its messenger, it becomes worthy of punishment in accordance with God's established practice in this matter.

فَعَقَرُوْهَا فَاَصْبَحُوْا نٰدِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۵۷﴾[77]

How could these miscreants have accepted this restriction imposed by Ṣāliḥ (sws). Thus they hamstrung the she-camel. Though one person committed his crime but the Qur'ān has ascribed it to the whole nation. The reason for this is that if others agree to such a heinous prank and do not raise their voice against it, it means that they too are involved in it. Thus the punishment that came engulfed the whole nation.

The words "so, they were left to regret" signify the punishment. It is evident from other instances of the Qur'ān that after this slaying of the she-camel, they were given three more days to realize their blunder and repent. However they did not benefit from this respite.

فَاَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ؕ اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِیْنَ ﴿۱۵۸﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِیْزُ الرَّحِیْمُ ﴿۱۵۹﴾[78]

These are the repetitive verses which have been mentioned earlier as well and their occasion and text is fully evident here.

Section VII: Verses (160-175)

In this section, the anecdote of prophet Lot (sws) is mentioned. Prophets Hūd (sws) and Ṣāliḥ warned their nations about their over-indulgence in feats of construction. Lot (sws), on the other hand, warned them on a shameful vice. Here it should be kept in mind that evils always come into being because of indifference to God and the Hereafter. For this reason, their disorder spreads in every sphere of human life. However, in nations, it is more evident in certain aspects viz a viz its temperament and circumstances. It is these prominent aspects that are discussed in this *sūrah*. Lot (sws) warned his nation of its grave consequences but it did not pay heed and ultimately met the fate he warned them of. This anecdote also ends on the repetitive verses. This shows that the purpose of narrating all these episodes is the same.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

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77. Thus they slew her. So, they were left to regret.

78. Ultimately, the torment seized them. Indeed, there is a great sign in this and most of them are not going to believe. And indeed your Lord is Mighty and Merciful.

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Text and Translation

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطِ ِۨ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ اِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ اَخُوْهُمْ لُوْطٌ اَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٦١﴾ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿١٦٢﴾
فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ اَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿١٦٣﴾ وَ مَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٦٤﴾ اَتَاْتُوْنَ
الذُّكْرَانَ مِنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ وَ تَذَرُوْنَ مَا خَلَقَ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِّنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ ؕ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ عٰدُوْنَ ﴿١٦٦﴾ قَالُوْا
لَئِنْ لَّمْ تَنْتَهِ يٰلُوْطُ لَتَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُخْرَجِيْنَ ﴿١٦٧﴾ قَالَ اِنِّيْ لِعَمَلِكُمْ مِّنَ الْقَالِيْنَ ﴿١٦٨﴾ رَبِّ نَجِّنِيْ وَ اَهْلِيْ مِمَّا
يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٦٩﴾ فَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَ اَهْلَهٗۤ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿١٧٠﴾ اِلَّا عَجُوْزًا فِي الْغٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿١٧١﴾ ثُمَّ دَمَّرْنَا الْاٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿١٧٢﴾ وَ اَمْطَرْنَا
عَلَيْهِمْ مَّطَرًا ۚ فَسَآءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنْذَرِيْنَ ﴿١٧٣﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ؕ وَ مَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٧٤﴾ وَ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ
الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٧٥﴾

The nation of Lot too denied the messengers when their brother Lot said to them: "Do you people not fear God? I am a trusted messenger for you. So, fear God and obey me. I do not ask you for any recompense on this. My recompense rests only with the God of the universe. (160-164)

Do you go to men among people of the world for your sexual desires, and leave the wives which your Lord has created for you? In fact, you are a people who have crossed the limits." (165-166)

They replied: "Lot! If you do not stop, you shall definitely be expelled from here." (167)

He replied: "I am strongly averse to this deed of yours. My Lord! Deliver me and my family from the consequence of their deed." So, We delivered him and all his family. Only an old woman was left with those who were left behind. Then We destroyed others and let loose a horrific storm on them. So, what evil was the rain that was unleashed on them who had been warned of their fate! (168-173)

Indeed, there is a great sign in this, and most of them are not going to believe. And your Lord indeed is Mighty and Merciful. (174-175)

Explanation

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطِ ِۨ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ اِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ اَخُوْهُمْ لُوْطٌ اَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿١٦١﴾ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿١٦٢﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ
اَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿١٦٣﴾ وَ مَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٦٤﴾[79]

These verses occur in the previous anecdotes also. They have been explained there.

79. The nation of Lot too denied the messengers when their brother Lot said to them: "Do you people not fear God? I am a trusted messenger for you. So, fear God and obey me. I do not ask you for any recompense on this. My recompense rests only with the God of the universe."

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اَتَاْتُوْنَ الذُّكْرَانَ مِنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ وَتَذَرُوْنَ مَا خَلَقَ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِّنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ ؕ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ عٰدُوْنَ ﴿١٦٦﴾[80]

These verses refer to the greatest sin of Lot's nation. At another instance, it has been explained that homosexuality had become fashion among them. When this happens in a nation, it becomes a pile of filth. God cleanses his earth from it.

The word "men" after "among people of the world" point to the utter blindness of his nation. Even when God has created women for them to quench their sexual desires, they go to men for this purpose. Women are not hidden from them. Even the blind can see them. But can they be done of the blindness that has overcome them. In verse 54 of Sūrah al-Naml, the words used are: اَتَاْتُوْنَ الْفَاحِشَةَ وَاَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُوْنَ (do you engage in this blatant vulgarity even though you have eyes?)

The words "and leave the wives which your Lord has created for you?" is an explanation of this blindness and the essential consequence of this vulgar tendency. People who have this tendency are afflicted with severe perversion and their attraction towards women becomes non-existent. Such people make a complete mockery of the institution of family and the society becomes a herd of animals driven by unnatural desires.

The words "in fact, you are a people who have crossed the limits" express yearning and sorrow. The implication is that words fail to express the heinous nature of their wrongdoing as they have far exceeded the limits of human nature.

قَالُوْا لَئِنْ لَّمْ تَنْتَهِ يٰلُوْطُ لَتَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُخْرَجِيْنَ ﴿١٦٧﴾[81]

The style of this threat clearly shows that it was not merely a threat: it was a decisive warning. They used to give threats earlier also; there are indications of this in the Qur'ān. However, this time they were bent upon implementing them.

قَالَ اِنِّيْ لِعَمَلِكُمْ مِّنَ الْقَالِيْنَ ﴿١٦٨﴾[82]

The word قلی means "intense hate and malice."

Lot (sws) answered the decisive warning of his people in an emphatic manner: their threat cannot make him even slightly budge from his stance. If they hate him because he rebukes them for their vulgarity, their threats can neither stop him nor soften him. They should be clear that he severely detests and hates it. They can do whatever they like; he does not care.

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80. "Do you go to men among people of the world for your sexual desires, and leave the wives which your Lord has created for you? In fact, you are a people who have crossed the limits."

81. They replied: "Lot! If you do not stop, you shall definitely be expelled from here."

82. He replied: "I am strongly averse to this deed of yours."

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By using the plural in مِّنَ الْقَالِيْنَ, stress has been added to his response. The implication is that it is not merely he who is averse to it; all upright people are averse to it and he is among them, and in no way can he be a companion to them in this act.

رَبِّ نَجِّنِيْ وَ اَهْلِيْ مِمَّا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۶۹﴾[83]

In the expression مِمَّا يَعْمَلُوْنَ a governing noun is suppressed in accordance with a common linguistic principle. The expression will be to the effect: من عقوبة ما يعملون.

Lot (sws) assessed that the decisive moment had arrived; if these people have decided to expel him from the land, then in accordance with the established practice of God a torment will necessarily visit them. Thus he uttered the words of prayer mentioned in this verse. It has been discussed at other instances that the word اَهْل also includes followers. Hence, if some people from among his nation professed faith in him, they are included in its connotation.

فَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَاَهْلَهٗۤ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿۱۷۰﴾ اِلَّا عَجُوْزًا فِي الْغٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۷۱﴾ ثُمَّ دَمَّرْنَا الْاٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿۱۷۲﴾ وَاَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَّطَرًا ۚ فَسَآءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنْذَرِيْنَ ﴿۱۷۳﴾[84]

After that, the torment descended on the nation of Lot (sws), the details of which have already been explained in Sūrah al-Ḥijr.

The word عَجُوْزٌ refers to his wife. All her sympathies were with her nation. Thus in spite of belonging to Lot's family she was punished. This word has been used here for her disparagingly.

The words "so, what evil was the rain that was unleashed on them who had been warned of their fate" are meant to warn the Quraysh. Those who do not pay heed to the warnings of a messenger end up facing the torment of God and what an evil torment it is.

اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۷۴﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿۱۷۵﴾[85]

These repetitive verses at the end have already been explained.

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83. "My Lord! Deliver me and my family from the consequence of their deed."

84. So, We delivered him and all his family. Only an old woman was left with those who were left behind. Then We destroyed others and let loose a horrific storm on them. So, what evil was the rain that was unleashed on them who had been warned of their fate!

85. Indeed, there is a great sign in this, and most of them are not going to believe. And your Lord indeed is Mighty and Merciful.

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Section VIII: Verses (176- 191)

This section mentions the anecdote of Prophet Shu'ayb (sws) and his people who lived in Madyan. Just as Lot (sws) warned his nation of their moral misconduct, Shu'ayb (sws) warned his nation of economic misconduct. However, his nation too adopted the same and ultimately met with the same fate as other nations did. This anecdote also ends with the repetitive verses.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

كَذَّبَ اَصۡحٰبُ لۡـَٔيۡكَةِ الۡمُرۡسَلِيۡنَ ﴿۱۷۶﴾ اِذۡ قَالَ لَهُمۡ شُعَيۡبٌ اَلَا تَتَّقُوۡنَ ﴿۱۷۷﴾ اِنِّىۡ لَكُمۡ رَسُوۡلٌ اَمِيۡنٌ ﴿۱۷۸﴾
فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ اَطِيۡعُوۡنِ ﴿۱۷۹﴾ وَمَاۤ اَسۡـَٔـلُكُمۡ عَلَيۡهِ مِنۡ اَجۡرٍ ۚ اِنۡ اَجۡرِىَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿۱۸۰﴾ اَوۡفُوا الۡكَيۡلَ وَ
لَا تَكُوۡنُوۡا مِنَ الۡمُخۡسِرِيۡنَ ﴿۱۸۱﴾ وَ زِنُوۡا بِالۡقِسۡطَاسِ الۡمُسۡتَقِيۡمِ ﴿۱۸۲﴾ وَلَا تَبۡخَسُوا النَّاسَ اَشۡيَآءَهُمۡ وَلَا تَعۡثَوۡا فِى
الۡاَرۡضِ مُفۡسِدِيۡنَ ﴿۱۸۳﴾ وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِىۡ خَلَقَكُمۡ وَالۡجِبِلَّةَ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ﴿۱۸۴﴾ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّمَاۤ اَنۡتَ مِنَ الۡمُسَحَّرِيۡنَ ﴿۱۸۵﴾ وَ
مَاۤ اَنۡتَ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثۡلُنَا وَ اِنۡ نَّظُنُّكَ لَمِنَ الۡكٰذِبِيۡنَ ﴿۱۸۶﴾ فَاَسۡقِطۡ عَلَيۡنَا كِسَفًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ اِنۡ كُنۡتَ مِنَ
الصّٰدِقِيۡنَ ﴿۱۸۷﴾ قَالَ رَبِّىۡۤ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۸۸﴾ فَكَذَّبُوۡهُ فَاَخَذَهُمۡ عَذَابُ يَوۡمِ الظُّلَّةِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ عَذَابَ يَوۡمٍ
عَظِيۡمٍ ﴿۱۸۹﴾ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكۡثَرُهُمۡ مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿۱۹۰﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الرَّحِيۡمُ ﴿۱۹۱﴾

The dwellers of the Forest also denied the messengers when Shu'ayb informed them: "Do you not fear God? I am a trusted messenger for you. So, fear God and obey me. And I do not ask you for any recompense on this. My recompense rests with the God of the universe." (176-180)

"Measure fully and be not among those who inflict loss on others and weigh with the correct scale and do not give things to people while lessening them. And do not go about spreading disorder in the land and fear the Being Who has created you and the generations before you as well." (181-184)

They replied: "You are only under a magical spell and just a mortal like us. And we think that you among absolute liars. (185-186)

So, if you are truthful, drop pieces on us from the sky." He said: "My Lord knows full well what you are doing." Thus, they rejected him; so, the punishment of the day of the canopy seized them and indeed it was the punishment of a horrible day. (187-189)

Indeed, there is a great sign in this, and most of them are not going to believe. And your Lord indeed is Mighty and Merciful. (190-191)

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Explanation

كَذَّبَ اَصۡحٰبُ لۡـَٔيۡكَةِ الۡمُرۡسَلِيۡنَ ﴿۱۷۶﴾[86]

The word لۡـَٔيۡكَةِ refers to bushes and forests. There was a forest near Madyan. For this reason, those residing in it were also known as “People of the Forest.” Some exegetes think that the “People of Madyan” and the “People of the Forest” are different from one another. They think that Shu‘ayb (sws) was sent towards both these nations. In my view, this opinion is incorrect.

اِذۡ قَالَ لَهُمۡ شُعَيۡبٌ اَلَا تَتَّقُوۡنَ ﴿۱۷۷﴾ اِنِّىۡ لَـكُمۡ رَسُوۡلٌ اَمِيۡنٌ ﴿۱۷۸﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ اَطِيۡعُوۡنِ ﴿۱۷۹﴾ وَمَاۤ اَسۡـَٔـلُكُمۡ عَلَيۡهِ مِنۡ اَجۡرٍ ۚ اِنۡ اَجۡرِىَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿۱۸۰﴾[87]

These verses occur in the previous anecdote and have already been explained.

اَوۡفُوا الۡكَيۡلَ وَلَا تَكُوۡنُوۡا مِنَ الۡمُخۡسِرِيۡنَ ﴿۱۸۱﴾ وَ زِنُوۡا بِالۡقِسۡطَاسِ الۡمُسۡتَقِيۡمِ ﴿۱۸۲﴾[88]

The people of Madyan were traders by profession and had advanced to great heights in it. However, when people are indifferent to God and the Hereafter, Satan gets the chance to play his pranks and wreak havoc. Thus these people were afflicted by deceiving others in weighing goods. This economic misconduct is a severe disease that is contagious. Once a single person is stricken by it, every trader and business is drawn into it. Then such forms of fraud, deception and exploitation in selling goods and merchandise come into being that every person cries out in despair. The Almighty has created this world with a balance and the heavens and the earth remain intact because of this balance. If this balance is ruined, the heavens and the earth are devastated. This system created by the Almighty guides mankind that they too should maintain this balance of justice in every sphere of life lest their social and economic systems are wreaked. More details will be provided on this in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Raḥmān insha’Allāh.

وَلَا تَبۡخَسُوا النَّاسَ اَشۡيَآءَهُمۡ وَلَا تَعۡثَوۡا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ مُفۡسِدِيۡنَ ﴿۱۸۳﴾[89]

A very heinous form of selling goods to people by lessening them is adulteration. This

86. The dwellers of the Forest also denied the messengers.

87. When Shu‘ayb informed them: “Do you not fear God? I am a trusted messenger for you. So, fear God and obey me. And I do not ask you for any recompense on this. My recompense rests with the God of the universe.”

88. “Measure fully and be not among those who inflict loss on others and weigh with the correct scale.”

89. “And do not give things to people while lessening them. And do not go about spreading disorder in the land.”

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means adding barley in wheat, fat in oil, sand in sugar, water in milk. In this way, the seller gives every buyer the requisite amount or measure but the proportion or percentage of the real thing sold is much less. Adulteration using harmful items is a further step in this horrific act. A stage is reached that when a person eats something bought from the market, he is not even sure if he is gulping poison or some common edibles.

The words "and do not go about spreading disorder in the land" point to the fact that if these people have advanced at the expense of destroying this balance, then such advancement is a bane not a boon. Their ways should be the ways of reformers and not of those who spread disorder. Feeding on illegal means has a very terrible fate. They must realize this.

وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِیْ خَلَقَكُمْ وَالْجِبِلَّةَ الْاَوَّلِیْنَ ﴿۱۸۴﴾[90]

The word جِبِلَّةٌ means "creatures." Here, prophet Shu'ayb (sws) has asked his people to learn a lesson from history. The Being Who created the earlier generations is the very One Who has created them. If He destroyed them because of spreading disorder in the land, His practice will not change in their case too. They will be punished for their economic misconduct. If their God had been different from that of their ancestors, they could have been dealt with by a different law. However, if He is the same – and no doubt He is the same – how can He deal with them differently? So they should fear Him and mend their ways.

قَالُوْۤا اِنَّمَاۤ اَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِیْنَ ﴿۱۸۵﴾ وَمَاۤ اَنْتَ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا وَاِنْ نَّظُنُّكَ لَمِنَ الْكٰذِبِیْنَ ﴿۱۸۶﴾ فَاَسْقِطْ عَلَیْنَا كِسَفًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِیْنَ ﴿۱۸۷﴾[91]

Shu'ayb's (sws) people replied with these words, an answer given by the rejecters of all messengers. The word كِسَفٌ is a plural of كِسْفَةٌ. It is mentioned at other instances of the Qur'ān that this demand put forth by his nation to send down pieces of the sky on them was made in response to his warning that if they did not listen to him, they will be faced with the same punishment as the ones faced the 'Ād, the Thamūd and the people of Lot (sws).

قَالَ رَبِّیْۤ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۸۸﴾[92]

This sentence expresses Shu'ayb's (sws) trust in God. His implication was that

90. "And fear the Being Who has created you and the generations before you as well."

91. They replied: "You are only under a magical spell and just a mortal like us. And we think that you among absolute liars. So, if you are truthful, drop pieces on us from the sky."

92. He said: "My Lord knows full well what you are doing."

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dropping pieces from the sky was under God's jurisdiction and not his. God fully knows their pranks; thus Shu'ayb (sws) has consigned this matter to Him. Whatever His wisdom entails will transpire and at the right time too.

فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَاَخَذَهُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمِ الظُّلَّةِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿۱۸۹﴾[93]

The nature of torment that visited the people of Shu'ayb (sws) has been described in verse 91 of Sūrah al-A'rāf. Those who want to see its details can look it up. In verse 94 of Sūrah Hūd, this torment is called صَيْحَةٌ which means shout and thunder. In the verse under discussion, the words "the punishment of the day of the canopy" are used. It is evident from this that from a distance this torment seemed like a column or canopy of dust or smoke. This shows that the nature of this torment was that of a stone-hurling wind that has been referred to in the anecdote of prophet Lot (sws) as *ḥāṣib*. This torment includes رَجْفَةٌ, صَيْحَةٌ, and ظُلَّةٌ.

اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۹۰﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿۱۹۱﴾[94]

These repetitive verses at the end have already been explained.

Section IX: Verses (192- 227)

Coming up are the concluding verses of the *sūrah* and the discourse links to its introductory part which is the real theme. There, while sounding assurance to the Prophet (sws), it has been stated that the Qur'ān being sent by God is an obvious fact. Those who are demanding a sign of punishment as a condition to believe in it are merely presenting a lame excuse. If God wants, He can show them such a sign as a result of which their arrogance will be shattered; however, He wants that instead of observing such a sign, they use their intellect and insight. However, if they continue with this stubborn behaviour each and every danger the Qur'ān is informing them of will materialize. After that, the anecdotes of prophets of God were narrated to highlight this very fact. The Prophet's addressees were asked that if they want signs, they should turn to these anecdotes. Each of them is a sign. If they adopt the same attitude, there is no reason why they should be treated differently than these nations.

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93. Thus, they rejected him; so, the punishment of the day of the canopy seized them and indeed it was the punishment of a horrible day.

94. Indeed, there is a great sign in this, and most of them are not going to believe. And your Lord indeed is Mighty and Merciful.

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These anecdotes ended on the account of Shu'ayb (sws) and his people. After this, the era of Moses (sws) begins as per the historical sequence. Since his anecdote has been described in detail earlier, it is not mentioned here and the discourse returns to its actual theme: the Qur'ān has been sent down by God; it is not inspired by some devil nor is it poetry. Previous scriptures have predicted it and the scholars of the Israelites are aware of these prophesies. If these unfortunate people deny it, the Prophet (sws) should not pay heed to them. Instead he should focus all his attention on the believers. These wretched people will soon encounter their fate.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

وَ اِنَّهٗ لَتَنْزِيْلُ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۱۹۲﴾ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوْحُ الْاَمِيْنُ ﴿۱۹۳﴾ عَلٰى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُنْذِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۹۴﴾
بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿۱۹۵﴾ وَ اِنَّهٗ لَفِيْ زُبُرِ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿۱۹۶﴾ اَوَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُمْ اٰيَةً اَنْ يَّعْلَمَهٗ عُلَمٰٓؤُا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿۱۹۷﴾ وَ لَوْ
نَزَّلْنٰهُ عَلٰى بَعْضِ الْاَعْجَمِيْنَ ﴿۱۹۸﴾ فَقَرَاَهٗ عَلَيْهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۹۹﴾ كَذٰلِكَ سَلَكْنٰهُ فِيْ قُلُوْبِ
الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿۲۰۰﴾ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ حَتّٰى يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ ﴿۲۰۱﴾ فَيَاْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَّ هُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿۲۰۲﴾
فَيَقُوْلُوْا هَلْ نَحْنُ مُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿۲۰۳﴾ اَفَبِعَذَابِنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ ﴿۲۰۴﴾ اَفَرَءَيْتَ اِنْ مَّتَّعْنٰهُمْ سِنِيْنَ ﴿۲۰۵﴾ ثُمَّ جَآءَهُمْ
مَّا كَانُوْا يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿۲۰۶﴾ مَآ اَغْنٰى عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يُمَتَّعُوْنَ ﴿۲۰۷﴾ وَ مَآ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ اِلَّا لَهَا مُنْذِرُوْنَ ﴿۲۰۸﴾
ذِكْرٰى ۛ وَ مَا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۲۰۹﴾ وَ مَا تَنَزَّلَتْ بِهِ الشَّيٰطِيْنُ ﴿۲۱۰﴾ وَ مَا يَنْۢبَغِيْ لَهُمْ وَ مَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ ﴿۲۱۱﴾ اِنَّهُمْ عَنِ
السَّمْعِ لَمَعْزُوْلُوْنَ ﴿۲۱۲﴾ فَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ فَتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُعَذَّبِيْنَ ﴿۲۱۳﴾ وَ اَنْذِرْ عَشِيْرَتَكَ الْاَقْرَبِيْنَ
﴿۲۱۴﴾ وَ اخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۲۱۵﴾ فَاِنْ عَصَوْكَ فَقُلْ اِنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۲۱۶﴾ وَ
تَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْعَزِيْزِ الرَّحِيْمِ ﴿۲۱۷﴾ الَّذِيْ يَرٰىكَ حِيْنَ تَقُوْمُ ﴿۲۱۸﴾ وَ تَقَلُّبَكَ فِي السّٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿۲۱۹﴾ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ
الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿۲۲۰﴾ هَلْ اُنَبِّئُكُمْ عَلٰى مَنْ تَنَزَّلُ الشَّيٰطِيْنُ ﴿۲۲۱﴾ تَنَزَّلُ عَلٰى كُلِّ اَفَّاكٍ اَثِيْمٍ ﴿۲۲۲﴾ يُّلْقُوْنَ السَّمْعَ وَ
اَكْثَرُهُمْ كٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿۲۲۳﴾ وَ الشُّعَرَآءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوٗنَ ﴿۲۲۴﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّهُمْ فِيْ كُلِّ وَادٍ يَّهِيْمُوْنَ ﴿۲۲۵﴾ وَ اَنَّهُمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ مَا
لَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿۲۲۶﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَ ذَكَرُوا اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا وَّ انْتَصَرُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُوْا ؕ وَ سَيَعْلَمُ
الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْٓا اَيَّ مُنْقَلَبٍ يَّنْقَلِبُوْنَ ﴿۲۲۷﴾

And indeed this has been revealed in a very elaborate manner by the Lord of the worlds. The Trusted Angel has brought it down to your heart so that you become

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among those who warn. In lucid Arabic and it is also mentioned in earlier scriptures. Is this not a sufficient sign for these people that the scholars of the Israelites know? (192-197)

And had We revealed it to a non-Arab and he would have read it out to them, they would not have professed faith in him. In this way, We make it enter the hearts of the wrongdoers. They will not accept faith until they see the painful torment. Thus it will suddenly visit them and they will not even be aware of it. At that time, they will say: "Will we get some respite?" (198-203)

Are they asking to hasten Our torment? Just see if We let them live for some more years; then, that torment comes to them with which they are being threatened with; what good will this reprieve be to them? (204-207)

We have never destroyed a city unless warners have first come for it to remind. And We are not unjust. (208-209)

And devils have not brought it down. Neither is it worthy of them nor do they have the capacity to do this. They have been deposed from eavesdropping. (210-212)

Thus, do not call upon any deity besides God so that you too become worthy of punishment. And warn your near ones of kin and lower your wings of affection on the believers who have followed you. (213-215)

If these people are disobeying you, then tell them: I am acquitted from whatever you are doing, and trust the Mighty and the Merciful God. The God Who sees you when you get up and observes your coming and going among those who prostrate. Indeed, He hears and knows all. (216-220)

Should I tell you on whom the devils descend? They descend on lying wretched people who intently try to hear and most of them are liars. (221-223)

And those who have gone astray follow the poets. Do you not see that they wander in every valley and do not practice what they preach? Only they are an exception to it who accepted faith, did righteous deeds and remembered God abundantly and who took revenge only when they were oppressed – and these oppressors, they shall soon know what their abode would be. (224-227)

Explanation

وَاِنَّهٗ لَتَنْزِيْلُ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۱۹۲﴾ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوْحُ الْاَمِيْنُ ﴿۱۹۳﴾ عَلٰى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُنْذِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۹۴﴾[95]

The antecedent of the pronoun in اِنَّهٗ is the Qur'an. Since the context is clear, this pronoun occurs for something that is understood.

The word تَنْزِيْلُ means to reveal something painstakingly and in a thorough way. The rejecters and adversaries of the Qur'ān are warned here that it has not something similar to what the soothsayers are inspired from the devils. It has been revealed in a

95. And indeed this has been revealed in a very elaborate manner by the Lord of the worlds. The Trusted Angel has brought it down to your heart so that you become among those who warn.

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very elaborate manner by the Lord of the worlds. Hence they must duly value it and not call their doom by denying it.

الرُّوْحُ الْاَمِيْنُ is the title of Gabriel. The attribute "trusted" shows that he has delivered it to the Prophet (sws) in a faithful way exactly as he received it. It may be kept in mind that in frenzy of animosity for Islam, the Jews and the Rawāfiḍ had blamed Gabriel of dishonesty in this matter. Details have been mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

The antecedent of the pronoun in عَلٰى قَلْبِكَ is Prophet Muḥammad (sws). In other words, it is the heart and not his fancy that is the recipient of divine revelation. The heart is the most noble organ of human body. Hence there is no chance that it be invaded by any satanic whisper or interference. Though the last of these verses apparently address the Prophet (sws) yet the purpose is to explain to the opponents that the Qur'ān has originated from a pure source and descended at a pure place.

The words "so that you become among those who warn" express the purpose of Qur'ān's revelation: the Prophet (sws) should fully make aware all those who are leading their lives while being indifferent to God and the Hereafter of the consequence of this indifference. The implication is that the Qur'ān is not merely the word of God, it is a warning and the Prophet (sws) is a warner. Thus people must pay heed to it; otherwise, get read to face the consequences it is informing them of.

بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿١٩٥﴾[96]

These words express God's favour to the Arabs: the Qur'ān has been revealed in eloquent Arabic, which is a means of honour for them and is also a conclusive communication of the truth to them. Now they cannot present the excuse that they were not able to understand it. If they do not give it due importance after all this elaborate arrangement from God, they will be responsible.

وَاِنَّهٗ لَفِيْ زُبُرِ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿١٩٦﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُمْ اٰيَةً اَنْ يَّعْلَمَهٗ عُلَمٰٓؤُا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿١٩٧﴾[97]

This is a reference to the testimony of ancient scriptures in favour of the Qur'ān: it has been mentioned in them and so are the prophesies of its arrival. These prophesies about the advent of the Prophet (sws) and his call found in the Torah, the Injīl and the Zabūr have been mentioned at relevant instances of this exegesis. The scholars of the Israelites fully knew them even though their majority hid them. However, among them were the true scholars too who openly acknowledged the Qur'ān and also professed faith in Muḥammad (sws). The Qur'ān has paid glowing tributes to their

96. In lucid Arabic.

97. And it is also mentioned in earlier scriptures. Is this not a sufficient sign for these people that the scholars of the Israelites know?

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acceptance of the truth at various instances.

In the above cited verses, these very prophesies and these scholars are referred and the question posed to the opponents of the Qur'ān. What more do they want. It may be kept in mind that in religious issues the Arabs regarded the People of Book to be superior. However, in frenzy of their denial of the Prophet (sws), they had become so blind that those among the People of Book who supported them were regarded by them to be their well-wishers. On the other hand, those among them who believed in the Prophet (sws) were regarded by them to be ones who had conspired in the authorship of the Qur'ān. This has been discussed in the previous *sūrah*.

The interpretation of the verse وَ اِنَّهٗ لَفِیْ زُبُرِ الْاَوَّلِیْنَ that I have presented is very clear. Its parallels can be seen in the earlier *sūrahs* as well as in the succeeding ones. However, I am not aware how some people have ascribed an opinion to our jurists that they have deduced from this verse: the Qur'ān can be read in a non-Arabic tongue also. This interpretation is incomprehensible. If the Qur'ān is rendered into another language, it cannot be called the Qur'ān; it will be its translation and there is great difference between a text and its translation. Not even the translation of a single *sūrah*, in fact, a single verse can regarded as a substitute of the original, let alone the translation of the whole Qur'ān. Those who are aware of the inimitability of the Qur'ān know that the meaning of some verses is absolutely clear. A translator does not feel and difficulty or ambiguity in them. However, after years of hard work, when he gets down to translating them, he feels that, in spite of having the ability to translate, he is not able to fully render the verses, let alone their eloquence. This is the case with the Qur'ān. However, the translations of other divine scriptures too – which do not even claim inimitability – cannot be regarded as a substitute of their originals. In fact, this is a reality that the major reason for the Jews and Christians going astray is that the original languages of their scriptures became extinct and they regarded their translations to be their substitute. They have based their understanding and system of reasoning on these translations. I have already explained at an appropriate instance how Saint Paul manipulated the translations to lead the Christians astray. Nevertheless, I think that this deduction from the verse has no grounds and is totally wrong in itself; in fact, it is a matter of grave consequence viz a viz religion. I think that this deduction has been ascribed to the respected jurists because of some misunderstanding. However, more discussion on this topic is beyond the scope of this exegesis. So, I would not like to devote more time here in its research.

وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنٰهُ عَلٰی بَعْضِ الْاَعْجَمِیْنَ ﴿۱۹۸﴾ فَقَرَاَهٗ عَلَیْهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ مُؤْمِنِیْنَ ﴿۱۹۹﴾[98]

These verses further explain God's favour mentioned in verse 196. These Arabs

98. And had We revealed it to a non-Arab and he would have read it out to them, they would not have professed faith in him.

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could have had an excuse of the Qur'ān been revealed in an non-Arabic tongue. But what is the excuse they have when the Qur'ān has been revealed in their own best language to a best person among them. In verse 44 of Sūrah Ḥā Mīm al-Sajdah, it is similarly stated: وَلَوْ جَعَلْنٰهُ قُرْاٰنًا اَعْجَمِيًّا لَّقَالُوْا لَوْلَا فُصِّلَتْ اٰيٰتُهٗ ؕ ءَاَعْجَمِيٌّ وَّعَرَبِيٌّ (and had We revealed the Qur'an in a foreign tongue, these people would have objected: "Why were not its verses expounded?" The discourse in a foreign tongue, and the addressees Arabs?") In verse 103 of Sūrah al-Naḥal a specific aspect of this topic is explained. Those interested can take a look.

كَذٰلِكَ سَلَكْنٰهُ فِيْ قُلُوْبِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿۲۰۰﴾ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ حَتّٰى يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ ﴿۲۰۱﴾ فَيَاْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَّ هُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿۲۰۲﴾ فَيَقُوْلُوْا هَلْ نَحْنُ مُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿۲۰۳﴾[99]

The سَلَكَ word also means "to make something enter something." Here it is used in this meaning.

These verses sound assurance to the Prophet (sws): if these people are showing aversion to the Qur'ān, it is not because of any fault in it; the fault actually lies in their hearts. Persistence in sin has corrupted these hearts so much that they have lost their ability to accept the truth. Since they have continued to adhere to wrong path, their hearts have been twisted. For this reason, the true message of the Qur'ān pierces their hearts but their disposition refuses to accept it. People whose digestive system has become stricken with ailments, the best of nourishments can do nothing for them. They actually throw it up. Such is the case with these people too. All this is in accordance with the established practice of God. This is how God deals with those whose nature has become perverted. Now these people will accept the veracity of the Qur'ān only when they see the punishment it is informing them of. This punishment will visit them suddenly. They will not know of it until appears. At that time, they will yearn to be given reprieve so that they reform themselves; but alas the time for this would have passed.

اَفَبِعَذَابِنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ ﴿۲۰۴﴾ اَفَرَءَيْتَ اِنْ مَّتَّعْنٰهُمْ سِنِيْنَ ﴿۲۰۵﴾ ثُمَّ جَآءَهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿۲۰۶﴾ مَآ اَغْنٰى عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يُمَتَّعُوْنَ ﴿۲۰۷﴾[100]

The posed question expresses amazement. The implication is that these people want

99. In this way, We make it enter the hearts of the wrongdoers. They will not accept faith until they see the painful torment. Thus it will suddenly visit them and they will not even be aware of it. At that time, they will say: "Will we get some respite?"

100. Are they asking to hasten Our torment? Just see if We let them live for some more years; then, that torment comes to them with which they are being threatened with; what good will this reprieve be to them?

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to hasten the punishment; yet what is destined to come is nevertheless destined to come. Any delay in its arrival does not secure them from it. If God has granted them the respite to live and enjoy until a certain period of time, this will not make any difference. Ultimately they will have to face what they are being informed of. The advent of a messenger will make them encounter this decisive phase. The delay is because of God's wisdom and should not be cause for them to stop fearing its arrival. If, as a result, they are making fun of it, then this is their misfortune.

وَمَآ اَهۡلَكۡنَا مِنۡ قَرۡيَةٍ اِلَّا لَهَا مُنۡذِرُوۡنَ ﴿۲۰۸﴾ ذِكۡرٰى ۛ وَمَا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيۡنَ ﴿۲۰۹﴾[101]

This is a reminder of the established practice God has adopted regarding nations of the world. Since He is just and merciful, He does not destroy a nation without warning it and conclusively delivering the truth to it. The word ذِكۡرٰى (reminder) expounds the reason of a messenger's advent and the style shows that it is being emphasized that without such a reminder, God does not destroy a nation. Not doing so is an injustice and God is not unjust. If they do not duly value this reminder, they shall have to face the destined result and this would not be any injustice. In fact, it would be exact justice.

وَمَا تَنَزَّلَتۡ بِهِ الشَّيٰطِيۡنُ ﴿۲۱۰﴾[102]

What was stated earlier in verse 192 in a positive sense, is stated here in a negative one. While keeping in view both these senses, the verse would mean that this is the word sent down by God and not by the devils as they – the Quraysh – contend.

وَمَا يَنۡۢبَغِىۡ لَهُمۡ وَمَا يَسۡتَطِيۡعُوۡنَ ﴿۲۱۱﴾ اِنَّهُمۡ عَنِ السَّمۡعِ لَمَعۡزُوۡلُوۡنَ ﴿۲۱۲﴾[103]

Stated here is the reason why the Qur'ān cannot be the word of devils: neither are they worthy of it not is it in line with their mission. How can they destroy their own kingdom by their own hands? Precisely the same thing was said by Jesus (sws) to the jurists and the Pharisees of this times when to counter the effect of his miracles, they started to say the masses that it is with the help of Beelzebul, the chief evil, spirit that he shows these miracles:

> But some of them [–the Pharisees and the jurists–] said, "By Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons." … Jesus knew their thoughts and said to

101. We have never destroyed a city unless warners have first come for it to remind. And We are not unjust.

102. And devils have not brought it down.

103. Neither is it worthy of them nor do they have the capacity to do this. c.

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them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? (Luke, 11:16-18)

Exactly the same point is made by the Qur'ān by the words "neither is it worthy of them." The second answer given by the Qur'ān is "nor do they have the capacity to do this." The Qur'ān has repeatedly challenged the Quraysh that if they regard it to be the product of a human being, they should bring forth something like it with the help of their deities, poets, soothsayers and the jinn. However, they could not produce something like it. This obviously meant that the Qur'ān was not the word of the jinn or the devils. If they had the capacity to do it, their foremost friendship was with the Quraysh and their soothsayers. Why did they not help them?

The third answer given to them by the Qur'ān is "nor do they have the capacity to do this." Until then they would try to eavesdrop but after that they were stopped from doing this. The jinn have confessed this in their own words:

وَّاَنَّا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَآءَ فَوَجَدْنٰهَا مُلِئَتْ حَرَسًا شَدِيْدًا وَّ شُهُبًا. وَّاَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ ؕ فَمَنْ يَّسْتَمِعِ الْاٰنَ يَجِدْ لَهٗ شِهَابًا رَّصَدًا. (۷۲: ۸-۹)

And we observed the heavens and found it filled with stern guards and meteors. And we were able to sit in some of its stations to eavesdrop, but now whoever tries to eavesdrop finds a meteor waiting for him. (72:8-9)

These verses of Sūrah al-Jinn point towards an important arrangement made by God in His kingdom. It has been made by Him to protect the Qur'ān from every sort of incursion from Satan and his army. Insha'Allah, this will be explained further in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Jinn.

فَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ فَتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُعَذَّبِيْنَ ﴿۲۱۳﴾[104]

These and some of the succeeding are addressed to the Prophet (sws). However, the wrath and anger in them are directed to his opponents and rejecters.

وَاَنْذِرْ عَشِيْرَتَكَ الْاَقْرَبِيْنَ ﴿۲۱۴﴾ وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۲۱۵﴾[105]

The Prophet (sws) is told that his greatest responsibility lies towards his near of kin.

104. Thus, do not call upon any deity besides God so that you too become worthy of punishment.

105. And warn your near ones of kin and lower your wings of affection on the believers who have followed you.

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It may be kept in mind that it was his immediate family who was the custodian of the House of God and also regarded by the Arabs to be their religious and political leaders. Both these capacities entailed that he warn them of the imminent danger. If they mended their ways, it would have become easy to bring others to the right path. For this reason, the way prophets of God always adopted was that they warned the leaders of their time. They directed their attention to the masses when they lost hope in these leaders. Jesus (sws) expended all his efforts towards the scholars among the Jews. However, when they did not abstain from their obduracy, he turned to the masses. For this reason, Prophet Muḥammad (sws) has also been directed in these verses to address his kin. This will not only fulfil his obligation towards them, but it will also ease the way for his message to penetrate among the common man if his kin accept it.

The words "and lower your wings of affection on the believers who have followed you" brings the picture of a hen protecting her young ones from danger lest they don't realize it. It may be kept in mind that very few of the kin professed faith in the Prophet (sws) whom he was asked to warn. Most of those who did were the poor among the masses whom the leaders of the Quraysh regarded to be very lowly in status. To one of them, the Prophet (sws) has been asked to show affection and to the other he has been asked to deliver warning.

فَاِنۡ عَصَوۡكَ فَقُلۡ اِنِّىۡ بَرِىۡٓءٌ مِّمَّا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۲۱۶﴾[106]

The Prophet (sws) should declare his acquittal from his kin if they do not accept his warning. This declaration of acquittal is the last phase of warning, as has been stated at other instances. After this, the phase of punishment for the rejecters of a messenger and that of migration for his followers arrives. This declaration of acquittal is attributed to all messengers of God. The way Abraham (sws) declared it before his father has been mentioned earlier.

وَتَوَكَّلۡ عَلَى الۡعَزِيۡزِ الرَّحِيۡمِ ﴿۲۱۷﴾[107]

The Prophet (sws) should not care about the consequences of this declaration of acquittal and fully repose his trust in the powerful and merciful God. He will help him and his companions from all the hardships and dangers of the coming phases. Since He is powerful, He will be able to do what He intends. None can stop Him. And since He is merciful too, He will show mercy to His servants who will forsake their relatives for Him. It should be kept in mind that after the declaration of acquittal, a messenger and his companions enter into a new phase of their lives and this new

106. If these people are disobeying you, then tell them: I am acquitted from whatever you are doing.

107. And trust the Mighty and the Merciful God.

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phase is totally hidden from them. For this reason, this new phase is fraught with hardships. It is not at all easy to convert friends into foes when nothing is known of the future. Only those can pass through these difficult times who trust their powerful and merciful Lord.

الَّذِیْ یَرٰىكَ حِیْنَ تَقُوْمُ ﴿۲۱۸﴾ وَ تَقَلُّبَكَ فِی السّٰجِدِیْنَ ﴿۲۱۹﴾ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِیْعُ الْعَلِیْمُ ﴿۲۲۰﴾[108]

These verses shower praises in a very affectionate and affable manner on the vigil and night worship of the Prophet (sws) and his companions to procure the pleasure of God. He should trust the God Who watches him when he gets up to pray at night and supplicate before Him. The Prophet (sws) is also in God's notice when he tries that his companions also reap the blessings of the night prayer and supplication. So when God is aware of all these activities, He will take these into account. The mighty and merciful Lord will help him in every hardship.

Out exegetes have presented various opinions in the interpretation of the expression "when you get up" and each can be possible. However, in my opinion, the correct opinion among these is the one which says that this getting up relates to getting up for the *tahajjud* prayer. A strong indication to this is found in the words "your coming and going among those who prostrate." It has been mentioned elsewhere that more the difficulties the Prophet (sws) encountered in his preaching, the more time he spent in the *tahajjud* prayer. The Almighty too directed him to do so. More details about this can be seen in the *sūrahs* of the last chapter. The Prophet's *tahajjud* worship is also mentioned in verse 48 of Sūrah al-Ṭūr and verse 40 of Sūrah Qāf, where more explanation will be provided.

The word تَقَلُّب means "coming and going."

Just as the Prophet (sws) was diligent in the night prayer and supplications, he also stressed upon his companions to show the same diligence. At various times, he would also go to the mosque to see the spiritually fulfilling scene that people were engaged in prayers and supplications. Earlier, in verse 215, he was directed to spread his wings of affection over the believers; this is another aspect of that directive: like him, his followers were also to remain diligent and vigilant. It is mentioned in the Gospels that when the last phase of trial arrived, Jesus (sws) went to the mountains and busied himself in supplications and also asked his disciples to remain awake and pray to God to save them from any trial. Then he would repeatedly go to see whether his companions were supplicating or not. If the disciples went off to sleep, he would repeatedly wake them up to supplicate for protection against any trial.

Earlier, the attributes "mighty and merciful" were mentioned after directing the believers to trust God. Now the attributes "knows and hears all" are mentioned after

108. The God Who sees you when you get up and observes your coming and going among those who prostrate. Indeed, He hears and knows all.

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referring to their night worship. The occasion and context for this is evident.Trusting God has a lot to do with keeping these attributes in mind.

هَلۡ اُنَبِّئُكُمۡ عَلٰى مَنۡ تَنَزَّلُ الشَّيٰطِيۡنُ ﴿۲۲۱﴾ تَنَزَّلُ عَلٰى كُلِّ اَفَّاكٍ اَثِيۡمٍ ﴿۲۲۲﴾ يُّلۡقُوۡنَ السَّمۡعَ وَاَكۡثَرُهُمۡ كٰذِبُوۡنَ ﴿۲۲۳﴾[109]

Earlier verses mention with full detail the source and fountainhead of the Qur'ān, its secure passage of descent and the purity of its bearer. It was refuted that it had been inspired by the devil. All these details were given to reject the propoganda of the Prophet's opponents that he was a soothsayer and just as the devils inspire soothsayers with the knowledge of the Unseen, they inpire the Prophet (sws) too with this knowledge. Later he presents this as divine revelation.

Now the verses under discussion address those who were blaming the Prophet (sws). The verse portrays these soothsayers who had successfully deceived these people who were making these accusations. By mentioning these soothsayers with their traits, their character is fully depicted. Their first attribute which is mentioned is that they are اَفَّاك. It means that they are total liars, cheats and swindlers. In order to fool simpletons, they fabricate various lies and then present them before the people with the claim that they are matters of the unseen that have been revealed to them. Their second attribute cited is اَثِيۡم which means that they are incriminated with all sorts of moral sins. At the end, a sketch is portrayed of the trickery which they employ to fool the masses: when foolish people turn to them to find out matters of the Unseen, these people enter into a state of meditation in which they chant words and then utter rhymed prose (which in most cases is meaningless). They present these words saying that they have been revealed to them from certain jinn. This meditation is called سمع by the Qur'ān as they sit in meditation in a manner as if they are intently listening to some unseen voice. It should be kept in mind that this method of meditation has been in vogue in all idolatrous nations. Soothsayers, pundits, yogis, mystics, grave-custodians have been making this display to claim to get in touch with spirits and mediums to fool the masses.

Some among the soothsayers would know sorcery and make contact with the jinn from whom they would receive a mixture of right and wrong information. However, most among them adopted soothsaying as a profession to deceive and defraud people and had nothing to do with soothsaying. The words "most of them are liars" refer to such liars. If a person is really a magician, then at least he is a true exponent of this skill even though this skill is evil. However, a person who poses himself to be a magician is an absolute liar.

109. Should I tell you on whom the devils descend? They descend on lying wretched people who intently try to hear and most of them are liars.

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وَالشُّعَرَآءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوٗنَ ﴿٢٢٤﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّهُمْ فِيْ كُلِّ وَادٍ يَّهِيْمُوْنَ ﴿٢٢٥﴾ وَ اَنَّهُمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٢٦﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَذَكَرُوا اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا وَّانْتَصَرُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُوْا ؕ وَسَيَعْلَمُ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْۤا اَيَّ مُنْقَلَبٍ يَّنْقَلِبُوْنَ ﴿٢٢٧﴾[110]

The previous verses refute the blame of the Prophet (sws) being a soothsayer. In these verses, the accusation that he was poet is refuted. When the Quraysh used to call him a poet and the Qur'ān as poetry, it was not in the conventional sense and how could they have said so. In reality, when they saw that the eloquence of the Qur'ān was conquering hearts and in this way its claim of being from God was being established day by day, they started to stir this propoganda that the Qur'ān was a book of poetry. If it was so powerful and potent, it was not because of being from any divine origin but because it was the work of an eloquent poet like so many other eloquent poets of their lore. The Arabs also believed that each poet would be accompanied by jinn who inspires him with poetry. Thus the Quraysh wanted to give this impression to their masses that the Prophet (sws) too was inspired by jinn and his claim that he was being imparted by an angel was totally wrong.

With this mental notion of the accusers in mind, deliberation shows the Qur'ān has placed three benchmarks against which they can check if it is of the form of poetry produced by a poet or is divine in origin produced by God's messenger.

The first benchmark put forth by the Qur'ān is "and those who have gone astray follow the poets." A tree is known by its fruit and a person is known by his company. The Quraysh should observe what type of people have been attracted by the works of their soothsayers and what type by the word presented by the Prophet (sws). If they are fair in their observation, they will see that the people who sit in the company of their soothsayers are rogues, ruffians and miscreants. On the other hand, those who relish the company of the messenger are fair, upright and God-fearing individuals. It should be kept in mind that poetry had great importance in the Arab society. Poets held the reins of the masses. These masses would blindly jump into the fire lighted by them. The famous scuffle between the Bakr and Taghlib tribes went on for half a century. A prominent poet Muhalhal ibn Rabī'ah (d. 531 AD) was the one responsible in igniting this war. The extent of immorality with which the poetry of Arabs poets was replete with can be gauged from the poetry of their greatest poet: Imru' al-Qays (d. 544 AD). He stands unparalleled in the lecherous content of his poetry. In spite of regarding him to be their greatest poet, the Arabs called him الملك الضليل (the wavered king). If we find any mention of good conduct and morality in his poems, they are a

110. And those who have gone astray follow the poets. Do you not see that they wander in every valley and do not practice what they preach? Only they are an exception to it who accepted faith, did righteous deeds and remembered God abundantly and who took revenge only when they were oppressed – and these oppressors, they shall soon know what their abode would be.

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means of expressing superiority to other tribes and poets, and even then such evils are intertwined with them that their harm surpasses their benefit. I have written in detail about this in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Those interested may look it up. It is obvious that only those people will gather around a poet whose habits and traits are similar to him.

The second benchmark put forth by the Qur'ān is: "do you not see that they wander in every valley." The compositions of such poets have no purpose in them. If some unique style comes across their minds to express what frequented their hearts they would express it in a couplet regardless whether it was divine or satanic or based on one's evil desires or whether it could inspire others to good or evil. If one reads their compositions, one couplet will portray them a saint and another a devil. In one breath, they will utter words both of virtue and vice in an impetuous way. Since what they utter has a very unique and effective style, readers would be influenced by both types of words. However, since one's inner-self has more proclivity to evil, it is stamped by vice but the effect of virtue soon disappears and in this way if there is some benefit in their words, it is lost in their contradiction of thoughts. If healthy plants are sown in a jungle of weeds, they do not grow.

Contrary to this, such is the harmony found in the Qur'ān that it has a specific purpose. From the beginning to the end every verse relates to this purpose. It is not possible that anyone can point out any contradiciton in it. The Qur'ān has proven the veracity of this specific purpose with such convincing arguments that only an obdurate person can deny it. The implication is that how can such a book be regarded as poetry and its presenter called a poet.

The third benchmark put forth by the Qur'ān is "and do not practice what they preach." Poets may present themselves as heroes and reputable personalities; but this is mere bluff. As far as their conduct is concerned, they are a shame to mankind. They live in an imaginary world and dwell in fantasies. The ideals they present are never followed by them. Their poetry depicts feats of their gallantry but in reality they are cowards.

On the other hand, the Prophet (sws) is the greatest exponent of the Book he is presenting. If he asks people to be God-fearing, selfless and altruistic, then these traits are personified in him the utmost. His strongest enemy cannot point out any deviation in his beliefs and deeds from the Book he is presenting. So how can a person with such noble traits be placed in the same category as people whose beliefs and deeds are mutually contradictory.

The last of the verses under discussion mention an exception to the general principle about poets just mentioned: "Only they are an exception to it who accepted faith, did righteous deeds and remembered God abundantly and who took revenge only when they were oppressed – and these oppressors, they shall soon know what their abode would be." This is a reference to the poets found in the company of the Prophet (sws). Their faith has prescribed a purpose to their poetry. Their poetic compositions do not

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depict unreal scenarios. Their poems show support and express honour for the truth and are written to make the word of God superior. Moreover, they do not merely claim to possess the attributes they present. These traits are manifested in their persons. Piety and righteousness are writ large in all their undertakings. The content of their works mostly relates to God's remembrance and in making His word prevail. It does not have the love and lust rampant in poet compositions nor any expression of mutual superiority. If they say something about others in their poetry, it is not to defame them but to support the truth when then they have been oppressed. Every oppressed person has the right to defend his own self and others like him. At the end, the fate of the oppressors is portrayed. At the moment, the tongues of the oppressed are defending themselves, but soon the time will come when they will encounter their fate.

This critique of the Qur'ān on poetry and poets primarily relates to the pre-Qur'ānic classical poetry produced by their poets. However, to be fair, it applies to our poets and their poetry as well. And I am not referring to elementary exponents of this art, for I have seldom found the time to read such poets. I am expressing this opinion after reading the works of celebrated poets. Very few among them will conform to the standards presented by the Qur'ān.

With these words, the exegesis of this *sūrah* reaches its culmination. The correct interpretations of the verses presented here are the consequence of God's grace and all mistakes in this regard are the consequence of my own limited knowledge. May God protect me and the readers of this book from their harm. وآخر دعوانا ان الحمد لله رب العالمین (and our last words are: gratitude be to God, Lord of the worlds)

Raḥmānābād
30th January, 1974

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Sūrah al-Naml

Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

In the previous *sūrah*, it was explained that this Qur'ān was neither the work of a poet nor that of a soothsayer; in fact, it has been revealed by the Almighty; those who do not want to believe in it are making fun of it; their demand is that only when they observe what the Qur'ān is warning them of that they will believe in it; on the other hand, God wants them to seek a lesson from the history of Messengers and those who denied them, instead of demanding to see the punishment. Now in this *sūrah*, it is explained that God has revealed this Book for guidance and for delivering glad tidings; yet only those people will believe in it whose hearts harbour the fear of the Hereafter. Those who are engrossed in the luxuries and comforts of this life will not be able to give these pursuits. Their foul deeds have been made to appear fair to them. Such is the extent of this that no warning or reminding can influence them.

In the previous *sūrah*, the discussion was based on the two attributes of God: 'Azīz (the mighty) and Raḥīm (the merciful). I have already explained all aspects of these attributes. In this *sūrah*, the discussion is based on two other attributes of God: Ḥakīm (wise) and 'Alīm (knowledgeable). The implication is that this Qur'ān has been revealed by the wise and the knowledgeable God. Hence whatever He will do will be based on wisdom and knowledge. The Prophet (sws) and his companions should trust in the wise and knowledgeable God that He will make them succeed.

Analysis of Meanings

Verses (1-6): The introduction of this *sūrah* is similar to that of Sūrah Baqarah. It is explained in it that this Qur'ān in itself is a clear Book that appeals to the intellect and emotions of people. However, those who do not want to believe in the Hereafter will not believe in this Book. The lures and pleasures of life have overwhelmed them to such an extent that Satan has made their foul deeds appear fair to them and now that they have been blinded by them. They will continue to wander astray like this.

Verses (7-14): The initial part of the anecdote of Moses (sws) is mentioned. It is explained that God sent him as a messenger to the Pharaoh with nine blatant signs. However, in spite of the fact that the Pharaoh and his people were convinced that these were signs from God, they refused to accept Moses (sws) as His Messenger and ultimately they were destroyed.

Verses (15-44): God's righteous servants are mentioned. It is stated that they do not

become slaves to favours and riches. On the contrary, the more they are blessed with them the more they are thankful and humble before the Being Who actually blessed them with these favours and riches. The favours with which David (sws) and Solomon (sws) were blessed with are then described. It is evident from this description that favours and status, wisdom and scientific advancement with which God bestowed them had no parallel in history; however, they regarded every favour to be God's blessing and always kept this in mind that they are being tested by Him through these favours: whether they show gratitude in response or end up as ingrates.

Verses (45-53): In order to explain the fate of people who spread disorder in the land, reference to the nation of Thamūd has been given in previous *sūrahs*. In this *sūrah*, their fate is elucidated further: they were in large numbers and had nine tribes of warriors which would constantly be waging war on others. Prophet Ṣāliḥ (sws) tried to reform them. Not only did they not listen to him, they even tried to kill him. Ultimately, God's decisive punishment visited them and totally decimated the majestic structures and buildings constructed by them. The ruins of these buildings exist for the Quraysh to learn a lesson.

Verses (54-58): The anecdote of the nation of Lot (sws) is briefly alluded to. Lot (sws) tried to reform their morals. Instead of listening to him, they went after expelling him and his companions from the land. They remarked that Lot (sws) and his companions regard themselves to be very righteous and thereby have assumed this position of reforming others. Finally, they too were visited by God's torment which totally routed them. The Quraysh are frequently able to travel by their ruins.

Verses (59-68): By referring to each and every one of the multifarious signs of this universe, the addressees are posed the question: which of them can they ascribe to someone other than God? If their answer is in the negative, then on what grounds do they worship these things and are audacious enough to pick a fight against God and His Messenger. At the end, it is mentioned that as far as polytheism is concerned, they cannot present a single argument in its favour, yet they are inflicted with contradictions regarding the Hereafter. They think that it is a tale of the ancients, and it is in fact this view of theirs which is a reason of their rebelliousness.

Verses (69-93): In this concluding section of the sūrah, Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is assured and urged not to fret over them or worry about their contrivances. If they are asking to observe the promised punishment, he should tell them to be grateful of the respite they have. They must not invite their doom. The Prophet (sws) should only fulfil his obligation . If they do not listen to him, it is not his duty to make the dead and the deaf listen. He should openly declare that he has been directed to recite this Qur'ān, and that he who believes in it will benefit from this belief and he who rejects it will be responsible himself for this attitude. The Prophet (sws) would not be responsible for this. He is only a warner and not one who forces his opinion on others.

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Section I: Verses (1-6)

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

طٰسٓ ۟ تِلۡكَ اٰيٰتُ الۡقُرۡاٰنِ وَكِتَابٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ ۙ﴿۱﴾ هُدًى وَّبُشۡرٰى لِلۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ۙ﴿۲﴾ الَّذِيۡنَ يُقِيۡمُوۡنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤۡتُوۡنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ هُمۡ بِالۡاٰخِرَةِ هُمۡ يُوۡقِنُوۡنَ ﴿۳﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ لَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِالۡاٰخِرَةِ زَيَّنَّا لَهُمۡ اَعۡمَالَهُمۡ فَهُمۡ يَعۡمَهُوۡنَ ؕ﴿۴﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيۡنَ لَهُمۡ سُوۡٓءُ الۡعَذَابِ وَهُمۡ فِى الۡاٰخِرَةِ هُمُ الۡاَخۡسَرُوۡنَ ﴿۵﴾ وَاِنَّكَ لَتُلَقَّى الۡقُرۡاٰنَ مِنۡ لَّدُنۡ حَكِيۡمٍ عَلِيۡمٍ ﴿۶﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

This is Ṭā Sīn. These are the verses of the Qur'ān and a clear Book. It is guidance and [provides] glad tidings for the believers who are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*, and it is they who in fact have conviction in the Hereafter. (1-3)

Those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have made their deeds look fair to them; thus they are wandering about. It is these people for whom there is an evil punishment in this world and in the Hereafter too it is they who shall be in a severe loss. And indeed this Qur'ān is being taught to you from a wise and knowledgeable being. (4-6)

Explanation

طٰسٓ ۟ تِلۡكَ اٰيٰتُ الۡقُرۡاٰنِ وَكِتَابٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ ۙ﴿۱﴾[1]

طٰسٓ is the name of the *sūrah*. The word قُرۡاٰنٌ is well-known to connote a divine scripture. The attribute مُّبِيۡنٍ is meant to explain that this Book has such conclusive arguments in it for every claim it makes that it requires no external evidence or sign or miracle prove its veracity. This attribute has been cited here to dispel the objections of the people who were demanding a sign that verifies this Book. Here both these words have not only pointed to its exalted status but also its conclusive nature. The implication is that this word of God is not something to be made fun of and as far its conclusive nature is concerned, it is complete in itself. Hence people who want to do away with it by mocking at it should themselves contemplate the fate of this attitude.

هُدًى وَّبُشۡرٰى لِلۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ۙ﴿۲﴾ الَّذِيۡنَ يُقِيۡمُوۡنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤۡتُوۡنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَهُمۡ بِالۡاٰخِرَةِ هُمۡ يُوۡقِنُوۡنَ ﴿۳﴾[2]

1. This is Ṭā Sīn. These are the verses of the Qur'ān and a clear Book.
2. It is guidance and [provides] glad tidings for the believers who are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*, and it is they who in fact have conviction in the Hereafter.

The implication of these verses is that whether the opponents of this Book duly value it or not, it has been revealed as a guidance and glad tiding for those who have accepted faith. It is guiding them to the straight path in life and also giving them glad tidings of success in this world as well as in the next. Being diligent in the prayer and paying *zakāh* are mentioned as comprehensive traits of the believers. This has a special significance which I have explained at other instances: These two virtues bind all other virtues of religion together, whether they relate to the rights of God or to those of human beings. When these two are mentioned, it is as if all the rest have been mentioned.

The words وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوْقِنُوْنَ express emphasis and confinement. It points to the fact that those who are showing this diligence in praying and in giving *zakāh*, it is they who in fact believe in the Hereafter, and it is precisely this thing that has created in them the urge to believe in this Book. As for those who feel that these two obligations are a heavy burden, they are devoid of conviction in the Hereafter and such people will always remain deprived of belief in this Book.

[3] اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ زَيَّنَّا لَهُمْ اَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ ۝

This is a reference to the real reason of rejection of the disbelievers: those who do not believe in the Hereafter and think that the life of this world is all that there is have been made to see their foul deeds as fair. Such is the extent of this that they are not willing to think of anything else. This, in fact, is a reference to the established practice of God that has been explained at many instances in this exegesis: people who devote all their intelligence and abilities to gain the pleasures of this world only are made to become overwhelmed by them so much by God that they are neither prepared to leave these pleasures and luxuries nor can they leave them. They continue to wander about in achieving them until the day the angel of death claims their souls.

[4] اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ الْعَذَابِ وَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمُ الْاَخْسَرُوْنَ ۝

Since this verse mentions the punishment of the Hereafter independently, hence this indicates that the expression سُوْٓءُ الْعَذَابِ relates to worldly punishment. Here the people mentioned are the ones who had denied God's Messenger (sws). About them it has been clarified at relevant places of this exegesis that they are also necessarily inflicted with worldly punishment. For this reason, it is mentioned that for them is an evil punishment not only in this world but also in the Hereafter. The expression وَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمُ الْاَخْسَرُوْنَ carries the same emphasis and confinement as the one referred to earlier in وَهُمْ

3. Those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have made their deeds look fair to them; thus they are wandering about.

4. It is these people for whom there is an evil punishment in this world and in the Hereafter too it is they who shall be in a severe loss.

بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوْقِنُوْنَ. The implication is that since they lived their lives as total slaves of this world having no concern for the Hereafter so much so that being infatuated with the love of this world they even made fun of the Qur'ān, hence it is these people who will incur the most loss in the Hereafter.

وَاِنَّكَ لَتُلَقَّى الْقُرْاٰنَ مِنْ لَّدُنْ حَكِيْمٍ عَلِيْمٍ ۝ 5

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws): if these people are not accepting faith and are in fact opposing him, he should rest assured and ignore them. The Book that is being revealed to him is from a being who is both wise and knowledgeable. All his actions have some underlying wisdom in them and he is also aware of everything. So whatever happens will happen in accordance with both these attributes He has and it will carry good for the Prophet (sws). When the wise and knowledgeable God is revealing His words to him, He will never forsake him. In fact God will guide the Prophet (sws) at every step and take him to his destination.

Section II: Verses (7-14)

In this section, that part of Moses' (sws) anecdote is concisely referred to in which God granted him prophethood and directed him to go to the Pharaoh and his people after bestowing him with nine miracles. Here the purpose of alluding to this anecdote is to direct the attention of the Prophet (sws) to three things specially.

Firstly, God has sent divine revelations to him just as He had chosen Moses (sws) for this purpose and gave him prophethood. This is a favour God has bestowed on him. Neither should he be worried because of this new experience nor is there any reason for others to regard it to be something strange and alien.

Secondly, those who do not want to profess faith will continue to remain blind even after seeing miracles of all sorts. Thus God gave Moses (sws) not one or two but nine miracles. Those who were shown these miracles were convinced that these have a divine origin but they still did not accept faith.

Thirdly, the Almighty necessarily seizes people who spread disorder after given them a specific period of respite.

Readers may now study these verses, in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

اِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِاَهْلِهٖٓ اِنِّيْٓ اٰنَسْتُ نَارًا ؕ سَاٰتِيْكُمْ مِّنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ اَوْ اٰتِيْكُمْ بِشِهَابٍ قَبَسٍ لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُوْنَ ۝ 7

5. And indeed this Qur'ān is being taught to you from a wise and knowledgeable being.

فَلَمَّا جَآءَهَا نُوْدِیَ اَنْۢ بُوْرِكَ مَنْ فِی النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا ؕ وَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ ﴿۸﴾
یٰمُوْسٰۤی اِنَّهٗۤ اَنَا اللّٰهُ الْعَزِیْزُ الْحَكِیْمُ ﴿۹﴾ وَاَلْقِ عَصَاكَ ؕ فَلَمَّا رَاٰهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَاَنَّهَا جَآنٌّ وَّلّٰی مُدْبِرًا وَّلَمْ یُعَقِّبْ ؕ
یٰمُوْسٰی لَا تَخَفْ ۫ اِنِّیْ لَا یَخَافُ لَدَیَّ الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۰﴾ اِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حُسْنًۢا بَعْدَ سُوْٓءٍ فَاِنِّیْ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِیْمٌ ﴿۱۱﴾
وَاَدْخِلْ یَدَكَ فِیْ جَیْبِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَیْضَآءَ مِنْ غَیْرِ سُوْٓءٍ ۫ فِیْ تِسْعِ اٰیٰتٍ اِلٰی فِرْعَوْنَ وَقَوْمِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا
فٰسِقِیْنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَتْهُمْ اٰیٰتُنَا مُبْصِرَةً قَالُوْا هٰذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِیْنٌ ﴿۱۳﴾ وَجَحَدُوْا بِهَا وَاسْتَیْقَنَتْهَاۤ اَنْفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَّ
عُلُوًّا ؕ فَانْظُرْ كَیْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِیْنَ ﴿۱۴﴾

Recall when Moses said to his family: "I have seen something like fire. I will bring some news for you from there or an ember of fire so that you can warm your selves from it." So, when he reached it, he heard a voice: "Blessed be He Who is in this Fire and those who are around it. And exalted is God, Lord of the Worlds. (7-8)

Moses! This is I, God, the Powerful, the Wise. And put down your staff." Then when he saw it move as if it were a snake, he turned and fled away and did not even look back. God said: "Moses! Fear not! Messengers have nothing to fear in My presence. Except he who is guilty of vice, then after vice changed it into virtue, so I am Forgiving and Merciful. (9-11)

And insert your hand in the opening of your garment [at the chest]; it will come out white without any ailment. In the company of these nine signs, go to the Pharaoh and to his nation; they are a very disobedient people." Thus when these eye-opening signs of Ours came before them, they said: "This is plain magic." And they rejected them because of injustice and arrogance, even though their hearts had accepted these signs. So, see what fate these miscreants met! (12-14)

Explanation

اِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰی لِاَهْلِهٖۤ اِنِّیْۤ اٰنَسْتُ نَارًا ؕ سَاٰتِیْكُمْ مِّنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ اَوْ اٰتِیْكُمْ بِشِهَابٍ قَبَسٍ لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُوْنَ ﴿۷﴾[6]

This account of Moses (sws) has been mentioned in previous *sūrahs* and every part of it has also been explained. Here we shall only keep that aspect of it in consideration which relates to the coherence of the *sūrah*. About prophethood and messengerhood it is known that it is not something which everyone experiences. Only those people experience it who the Almighty selects for this special task. For this reason, those who are blessed by it also need time to get used to it. Similarly, those before whom it was presented also regarded it to be something unique and strange, and raised doubts and

6. Recall when Moses said to his family: "I have seen something like fire. I will bring some news for you from there or an ember of fire so that you can warm your selves from it."

objections against it. The only remedy to both these aspects was that incidents from the lives of those prophets be narrated who had passed through all these phases so that the Prophet (sws) could find assurance and comfort through their experiences and observations and his rivals were also conveyed the truth in a conclusive way. The prophet and messenger who resembled Muḥammad (sws) the most was Moses (sws). His life and times are mentioned in detail in the Torah and there also existed at that time a nation who laid claim to faith in him. Unfortunately, this nation was opposing the Prophet (sws), as will be referred to ahead in this *sūrah* as well. For this reason, the circumstances and experiences which Moses (sws) had gone through could have been the assuring the most for the Prophet (sws) and also something which his opponents could learn a lesson from if they wanted to. It is for these two purposes that this anecdote is being narrated. Though the Prophet (sws) is addressed, the direction of address is towards his rivals.

It is evident from this verse that propehthood and messengerhood is a blessing and gift of God. It cannot be obtained by a person of his own accord. Authors, poets, orators, soothsayers, magicians, astrologers, fortune-tellers and people similar to them learn their skills through effort and hard work spread over a long period of time. It is only then do they acquire expertise in these skills. However, God Himself trains and instructs a prophet and a messenger. A prophet is neither a student of any teacher nor studies in a seminary. He does not even have any desire to be appointed for this task. It is only God Who prepares him for this purpose by making him pass through various trials and tests. Joseph (sws) was trained and instructed in a jail of Egypt. David (sws) is reported to have said about himself: "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel'" (2Samuel, 7:8). In a similar way, Moses (sws) whose tale is being narrated here used to tend to the goats of Jethro in the land of Madyan. He lost his way on a dark and cold night while returning from there. He saw a light from afar. He told his family to stay there while he goes there to find out if there are people there to guide him or at least is able to bring for his family an ember to keep them warm.

فَلَمَّا جَآءَهَا نُوۡدِیَ اَنۡۢ بُوۡرِكَ مَنۡ فِی النَّارِ وَمَنۡ حَوۡلَهَا ؕ وَسُبۡحٰنَ اللّٰهِ رَبِّ الۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ ۝[7]

Moses (sws) had gone there to fetch an ember of fire. However, when he reached there, he heard a voice: "Blessed be He Who is in this Fire and those who are around it." The passive mood of the verb reflects ambiguity as well as magnification. In other words, Moses (sws) heard the voice of a caller but he could not determine who it belonged to it and from where it came. The words cited above reflect the contents of the voice: this is not fire: behind the veil of this light is the blessed being of God in the company of blessed angels. The reference of both God and His angels being blessed

7. So, when he reached it, he heard a voice: "Blessed be He Who is in this Fire and those who are around it. And exalted is God, Lord of the Worlds."

beings is not just a statement of fact; it is also meant to familiarize Moses (sws). Obviously, this phase was very essential for Moses (sws). One cannot even imagine what he may have gone through upon unexpectedly hearing a voice in the dark of night at the foot of a valley. In fact, had the first word not been a glad tiding of a blessing he would have been taken aback even more. This word must have assured him a lot: what he is hearing is not dangerous in any way; a blessed voice has come from a blessed source.

The words وَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ are meant to dispel any false notions about God, and in fact adds further emphasis to what is said earlier. The implication is that God, Lord of the worlds, is free of all defects and shortcomings and it His manifestation that Moses (sws) has glimpsed; therefore Moses (sws) should trust him. God will deal with him in a manner that befits His mercy and providence and there is no fear of any harm from Him; He is the Lord of all the universe; hence everything is under His control.

يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنَّهٗٓ اَنَا اللّٰهُ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۙ﴿۹﴾[8]

What was heard earlier by Moses (sws) was a voice whose speaker he could not determine. Now, God has directly addressed him and introduced Himself that He is the Powerful and the Wise. Obviously, the reason for introduction through these attributes could not have been that Moses (sws) was not aware of them: He was born among the Israelites and had spent a long time with Jethro (sws), and hence could not have been unaware of these attributes of God. The purpose of reminding him of these attributes was to strengthen his heart for the mission God had chosen him for. In the previous *sūrah*, the attributes of الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ (the powerful, the merciful) are repeated many times. Here, on the other hand, the attribute الْحَكِيْمُ (the wise) occurs with الْعَزِيْزُ (the powerful). The purpose is to inform Moses (sws) that he is conversing with someone who is dominant on everything; none can impede His intentions; at the same time, He is wise. All His intentions are based on wisdom and since the style adopted is of emphasis in the specific sense, what becomes further evident is that no one else has the extent of wisdom and knowledge as the one God has. Deliberation shows how important is the comprehension of these attributes in order to carry out the responsibilities of this mission on which Moses (sws) was being deputed and which are mentioned in the verses ahead. It was a cognizance of these attributes of God that created in him the determination and strength to challenge along with the Israelites such a tyrannical leader as the Pharaoh. He was helped and supported by the Almighty in this mission.

وَاَلْقِ عَصَاكَ ؕ فَلَمَّا رَاٰهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَاَنَّهَا جَآنٌّ وَّلّٰى مُدْبِرًا وَّلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ ؕ يٰمُوْسٰى لَا تَخَفْ ۫ اِنِّىْ لَا يَخَافُ لَدَىَّ الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ۖ﴿۱۰﴾[9]

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8. "Moses! This is I, God, the Powerful, the Wise."

9. Then when he saw it move as if it were a snake, he turned and fled away and did not even look back. God said: "Moses! Fear not! Messengers have nothing to fear in My presence."

The previous verses guide Moses (sws) regarding the mental and emotional preparation for the mission at hand. After that, he was given those profound signs which were his essential need to challenge the Pharaoh. The most important of these signs was that of the staff from which the rest of the signs emanated. This sign has been explained at other instances. It has also been explained why Moses (sws) was given these signs in the very first phase of his mission. Here only aspect needs to be understood: when Moses (sws) placed the staff on the ground in accordance with God's directive and when it started to swivel like a snake, he got so frightened that he ran away without even looking back. This aspect of the incident in my opinion has been specially mentioned to point out that the initial experiences of prophethood are very unfamiliar, quite unique and strange. For this reason, a prophet initially feels scared. However, gradually the Almighty familiarizes him with them. This aspect bears testimony to the fact that prophethood is not granted to those worthy of it because of their desire or demand. In fact, it is bestowed upon them without their expectation, and with great worry, concern and caution they bear its responsibility as an obligation from God – and this too after they fully became convinced that whatever observations they have seen are from God and they have been appointed from God for a special mission. Some important aspects of the Prophet's esoteric observations in the early days of his prophethood and the feelings he became overwhelmed with are mentioned in the *sūrahs* of the last chapter. *Insha'Allāh*, I will explain them there.

Consider now the verse under discussion: when Moses (sws) ran away after seeing his staff take the shape of a snake and did not even have the courage to look back, the Almighty assured him in a very affectionate way: he need not worry; he faces no danger; in fact, their enemies will face it; in the company of God, His messengers have nothing to fear; they are absolutely safe and secure; it is to whom they are sent who face danger if they do not profess faith in them. The implication is that he is God's messenger and his staff is a sword. So, why should he fear them; it is they who should fear him.

إِلَّا مَن ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حُسْنًا بَعْدَ سُوٓءٍ فَإِنِّى غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾[10]

Such are the upright and pious people of God that when they are faced with a trial, they are immediately are led to think that they must have committed some mistake lest this may be its punishment. It is possible that at this instant Moses (sws) may have thought of his killing of the Copt. Even though after that he had repented and God had also accepted his repentance, such is the nature of prophets of God and His righteous people that they are very conscious of self-accountability. For this reason, in order to emphasize the promised the glad tidings "messengers have nothing to fear in My presence," the Almighty also assured Moses (sws) that if any of His servants commits a

10. "Except he who is guilty of vice, then after vice changed it into virtue, so I am Forgiving and Merciful."

mistake and he repents and atones for the mistake, the Almighty forgives that person for He is forgiving and merciful. By stating these words in a generalized way, the benefit of the statement has encompassed all people and not just Moses (sws).

وَاَدۡخِلۡ يَدَكَ فِىۡ جَيۡبِكَ تَخۡرُجۡ بَيۡضَآءَ مِنۡ غَيۡرِ سُوۡٓءٍ‌ؕ فِىۡ تِسۡعِ اٰيٰتٍ اِلٰى فِرۡعَوۡنَ وَقَوۡمِهٖ‌ؕ اِنَّهُمۡ كَانُوۡا قَوۡمًا فٰسِقِيۡنَ ﴿۱۲﴾[11]

This is the second sign which was given to Moses (sws) at this instance. It has been explained earlier in Sūrah al-A'rāf and Sūrah Ṭāhā as well as in some other *sūrahs*. The fact that the words "it will come out white" are qualified by the clause "without any ailment" are meant to dispel any doubt in the mind of Moses (sws). It is also evident from this style of the Qur'ān that this assurances was sounded to him at the time of bestowal of this miracle, and this is also in accordance with sense and reason. The fear that overcame Moses (sws) when he was given the miracle of the staff could have overcome him at this instance also if this assurance had not been sounded. As a secondary benefit, this qualifying clause also refutes the statement of the Torah as per which this whiteness of his hand was due to leprosy. This has already been discussed in Sūrah Ṭāhā.

Before the words فِىۡ تِسۡعِ اٰيٰتٍ اِلٰى فِرۡعَوۡنَ وَقَوۡمِهٖ a verb like اِذۡهَبۡ is suppressed. The implication is that he should go to the Pharaoh and his people with these nine signs in order to warn them as they have become very defiant. Initially, Moses (sws) was only given the two signs of the staff and the white hand. However, concealed in them were many other signs which manifested themselves later. I have referred to their citations in the Torah in the exegesis of Sūrahs al-Baqarah, al-A'rāf and Ṭāhā etc. All these signs appeared through the staff of Moses (sws). Thus in the form of the staff, he was given the complete repertoire of miracles. It should be kept in mind that these nine signs relate to only those signs which appeared against the Pharaoh and his people. As for the signs which appeared from the staff especially for the Israelites, they are an entirely different category and it is evident from the Torah that they too were numerous.

فَلَمَّا جَآءَتۡهُمۡ اٰيٰتُنَا مُبۡصِرَةً قَالُوۡا هٰذَا سِحۡرٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ ﴿۱۳﴾[12]

The word مُبۡصِرَةً means "eye-opening." The miracles worked by prophets of God have always been regarded as miracles by those who observe them. Such was their profound nature that they even stirred the blind. However, those who did not want to

11. "And insert your hand in the opening of your garment [at the chest]; it will come out white without any ailment. In the company of these nine signs, go to the Pharaoh and to his nation; they are a very disobedient people."

12. Thus when these eye-opening signs of Ours came before them, they said: "This is plain magic."

believe regarded these miracles of Moses (sws) to be magic. So much so, even the magicians themselves openly confessed that these are not magic. Even then, the stubborn did not budge and continued to call them magic. Here it may be kept in mind what has been indicated earlier: the pinnacle of a magician's skill is that he is able to make a staff swivel like a snake. For this, he has to work very hard and only after repeated practice does he become adept and feels very proud of his achievement. On the other hand, Moses (sws) was so sacred when he saw his staff swivelling like a snake that he ran away and only after assurance from God did he become calm. Even then, these wrongdoers called him a skilful magician and his sign as plain magic.

وَجَحَدُوْا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَآ اَنْفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَّعُلُوًّا ؕ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿۱۴﴾[13]

Here, at the end, the real purpose is stated for which this anecdote is narrated. The Prophet (sws) is addressed and told that those who do not want to accept the call of truth find excuse even after seeing nine miracles. Their hearts acknowledge the veracity of this call but they continue to deny it through their tongues. The reason for their denial is not because the truth is not fully evident to them. The real reason for this is their "injustice" and "arrogance." They want to usurp the rights of God and His servants and at no cost give up this attitude. They become arrogant that makes them deny the greatest of truths which is against their desires. Such people who spread disorder in the land end up with the same fate as that of the Pharaoh and his people.

Section III: Verses (15-44)

It is evident from previous verses that the real reason for denying the truth is not because it is not evident but because of the injustice and arrogance of people. The favours blessed to people from God become a means of trial for them: instead of being profoundly grateful and obedient to God, they become arrogant and spread disorder in the land. In the forthcoming verses, the righteous servants of God are mentioned: the more they receive favours from God, the more grateful they become. As an example of such individuals, David (sws) and Solomon (sws) are presented. The majesty and splendour with which they were blessed stood unparalleled among their contemporaries and the wealth and resources they enjoyed were unmatched too. However, after obtaining all these things, they never became haughty and rebellious. On the contrary, they regarded each favour to be a trial from God and tried to fulfil their obligation towards it, and even succeeded.

Readers may now study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

13. And they rejected them because of injustice and arrogance, even though their hearts had accepted these signs. So, see what fate these miscreants met!

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا دَاوٗدَ وَسُلَيْمٰنَ عِلْمًا ۚ وَقَالَا الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ فَضَّلَنَا عَلٰى كَثِيْرٍ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَوَرِثَ
سُلَيْمٰنُ دَاوٗدَ وَقَالَ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ عُلِّمْنَا مَنْطِقَ الطَّيْرِ وَاُوْتِيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ۭ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿١٦﴾ وَ
حُشِرَ لِسُلَيْمٰنَ جُنُوْدُهٗ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ وَالطَّيْرِ فَهُمْ يُوْزَعُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ اَتَوْا عَلٰي وَادِ النَّمْلِ ۙ قَالَتْ نَمْلَةٌ
يّٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّمْلُ ادْخُلُوْا مَسٰكِنَكُمْ ۚ لَا يَحْطِمَنَّكُمْ سُلَيْمٰنُ وَجُنُوْدُهٗ ۙ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾ فَتَبَسَّمَ ضَاحِكًا مِّنْ قَوْلِهَا
وَقَالَ رَبِّ اَوْزِعْنِيْٓ اَنْ اَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِيْٓ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلٰي وَالِدَيَّ وَاَنْ اَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضٰىهُ وَاَدْخِلْنِيْ
بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِيْ عِبَادِكَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَتَفَقَّدَ الطَّيْرَ فَقَالَ مَا لِيَ لَآ اَرَى الْهُدْهُدَ ۣ اَمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْغَاۗىِٕبِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾
لَاُعَذِّبَنَّهٗ عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا اَوْ لَاَاْذْبَحَنَّهٗٓ اَوْ لَيَاْتِيَنِّيْ بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٢١﴾ فَمَكَثَ غَيْرَ بَعِيْدٍ فَقَالَ اَحَطْتُّ بِمَا لَمْ تُحِطْ
بِهٖ وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَاٍۭ بِنَبَاٍ يَّقِيْنٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ اِنِّىْ وَجَدْتُّ امْرَاَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ وَاُوْتِيَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾
وَجَدْتُّهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُوْنَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيْلِ فَهُمْ لَا
يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ اَلَّا يَسْجُدُوْا لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ يُخْرِجُ الْخَبْءَ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُخْفُوْنَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾
اَللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٢٦﴾ قَالَ سَنَنْظُرُ اَصَدَقْتَ اَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ اِذْهَبْ بِّكِتٰبِيْ هٰذَا
فَاَلْقِهْ اِلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ قَالَتْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمَلَؤُا اِنِّىْٓ اُلْقِيَ اِلَيَّ كِتٰبٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ اِنَّهٗ مِنْ
سُلَيْمٰنَ وَاِنَّهٗ بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ﴿٣٠﴾ اَلَّا تَعْلُوْا عَلَيَّ وَاْتُوْنِيْ مُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالَتْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمَلَؤُا اَفْتُوْنِيْ فِيْٓ
اَمْرِيْ ۚ مَا كُنْتُ قَاطِعَةً اَمْرًا حَتّٰى تَشْهَدُوْنِ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالُوْا نَحْنُ اُولُوْا قُوَّةٍ وَّاُولُوْا بَاْسٍ شَدِيْدٍ ۙ وَّالْاَمْرُ اِلَيْكِ فَانْظُرِيْ
مَاذَا تَاْمُرِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ قَالَتْ اِنَّ الْمُلُوْكَ اِذَا دَخَلُوْا قَرْيَةً اَفْسَدُوْهَا وَجَعَلُوْٓا اَعِزَّةَ اَهْلِهَآ اَذِلَّةً ۚ وَكَذٰلِكَ يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَ
اِنِّىْ مُرْسِلَةٌ اِلَيْهِمْ بِهَدِيَّةٍ فَنٰظِرَةٌۢ بِمَ يَرْجِعُ الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاۗءَ سُلَيْمٰنَ قَالَ اَتُمِدُّوْنَنِ بِمَالٍ ۭ فَمَآ اٰتٰىنِ
اللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّآ اٰتٰىكُمْ ۚ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ بِهَدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ اِرْجِعْ اِلَيْهِمْ فَلَنَاْتِيَنَّهُمْ بِجُنُوْدٍ لَّا قِبَلَ لَهُمْ بِهَا وَ
لَنُخْرِجَنَّهُمْ مِّنْهَآ اَذِلَّةً وَّهُمْ صٰغِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ قَالَ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمَلَؤُا اَيُّكُمْ يَاْتِيْنِيْ بِعَرْشِهَا قَبْلَ اَنْ يَّاْتُوْنِيْ مُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾
قَالَ عِفْرِيْتٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ اَنَا اٰتِيْكَ بِهٖ قَبْلَ اَنْ تَقُوْمَ مِنْ مَّقَامِكَ ۚ وَاِنِّيْ عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٌّ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ قَالَ الَّذِيْ عِنْدَهٗ عِلْمٌ
مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ اَنَا اٰتِيْكَ بِهٖ قَبْلَ اَنْ يَّرْتَدَّ اِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ ۭ فَلَمَّا رَاٰهُ مُسْتَقِرًّا عِنْدَهٗ قَالَ هٰذَا مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّيْ ۣ لِيَبْلُوَنِيْٓ

ءَاَشۡكُرُ اَمۡ اَكۡفُرُ ؕ وَمَنۡ شَكَرَ فَاِنَّمَا يَشۡكُرُ لِنَفۡسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنۡ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ رَبِّىۡ غَنِىٌّ كَرِيۡمٌ ﴿۴۰﴾ قَالَ نَكِّرُوۡا لَهَا عَرۡشَهَا نَنۡظُرۡ
اَتَهۡتَدِىۡۤ اَمۡ تَكُوۡنُ مِنَ الَّذِيۡنَ لَا يَهۡتَدُوۡنَ ﴿۴۱﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَتۡ قِيۡلَ اَهٰكَذَا عَرۡشُكِ ؕ قَالَتۡ كَاَنَّهٗ هُوَ ۚ وَاُوۡتِيۡنَا الۡعِلۡمَ
مِنۡ قَبۡلِهَا وَكُنَّا مُسۡلِمِيۡنَ ﴿۴۲﴾ وَصَدَّهَا مَا كَانَتۡ تَّعۡبُدُ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهَا كَانَتۡ مِنۡ قَوۡمٍ كٰفِرِيۡنَ ﴿۴۳﴾ قِيۡلَ لَهَا
ادۡخُلِى الصَّرۡحَ ۚ فَلَمَّا رَاَتۡهُ حَسِبَتۡهُ لُجَّةً وَّكَشَفَتۡ عَنۡ سَاقَيۡهَا ؕ قَالَ اِنَّهٗ صَرۡحٌ مُّمَرَّدٌ مِّنۡ قَوَارِيۡرَ ؕ قَالَتۡ رَبِّ اِنِّىۡ
ظَلَمۡتُ نَفۡسِىۡ وَاَسۡلَمۡتُ مَعَ سُلَيۡمٰنَ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿۴۴﴾

And We bestowed great knowledge on David and Solomon, and they said: "Gratitude be to God Who has granted us superiority over many of His believing servants." (15)

And Solomon became the heir to David and he said: "People! We have also been taught the language of the birds and also given all other things. Indeed, this is a manifest blessing." (16)

And all the army of Solomon – from among the jinn, humans and birds – were assembled for his inspection and they were being categorized. Until when they reached the valley of the ants, an ant said: "Ants! Enter your holes lest Solomon and his armies may trample you and they are not even aware of it." Thus he happily smiled at her words and prayed: "Lord! Give me the strength so that I remain grateful to You for Your favour which You have done to me and to my parents and I do such pious deeds which please you and with your blessing, admit me among your righteous servants." (17-19)

And when he inspected the army of birds, he said: "What is it that I do not see the lapwing? Is he present or is he among those absent? I shall severely punish him or slaughter him unless he presents a convincing excuse before me." Not much time elapsed when the lapwing came and said: "I am aware of that which you do not know and I have brought true information for you from the country of Sabā. I saw a woman ruling them and everything is available to her and she has a very large throne. I have seen her and her nation worshipping the sun by leaving God. And Satan has made their deeds look fair to them; thus he has stopped them from the right path; so, they are not finding the way." (20-24)

[Satan has stopped them from the right path] so that they do not prostrate before God Who makes known the hidden things of the heavens and the earth and knows what you conceal and what you reveal. There is no deity except God. He only is the Master of the glorious throne. (25-26)

Solomon said: "We shall see whether you are telling the truth or you are among the liars. Take this letter of mine and deliver it to them and then draw away to see their reaction?" (27-28)

She said: "Courtiers! I have been delivered a letter. It is from Solomon and it is 'with *bismillah al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*; do not show rebelliousness against me and come

to me in obedience.'" She said: "Courtiers! Give your opinion in this matter of mine. I do not take decisions unless you people are present." (29-32)

They replied: "We are powerful and have great military might. The decision is in your hands. Thus deliberate what directive you may give." (33)

She said: "When kings enter a city, they ravage it and humiliate the honourable in it, and these people will also do the same. And I will send my delegation to him with gifts and see what reply my delegation brings back." (34-35)

Then when the delegation reached Solomon, he said: "Do you want to help me through wealth? Whatever God has given me is far better than what He has given you. It is you people who are happy with your gifts. Go back to those people. We shall attack them with armies they will not be able to face and We shall disgracefully expel them from there and they will end up humiliated." (36-37)

Solomon said: "Courtiers! Which of you can bring her throne to me before they come to me in obedience?" A fierce individual from among the jinn said: "I shall bring it to you before you leave this gathering of yours. And I have the power to accomplish this task and I am also trustworthy." A person who had knowledge of the Book said: "I shall bring it to you before you blink your eye." Then when Solomon saw it placed in front of him, he cried out: "This is my Lord's blessing so that He may test me whether I am grateful to him or ungrateful. And he who expresses gratitude does it for his own benefit and he who was ungrateful, then my Lord is Self-Sufficient and Gracious." (38-40)

Solomon ordered: "Change the shape of her throne; let us see whether she recognizes it or becomes among those who are not able to recognize it." So, when she arrived, she was asked: "Is your throne similar to this?" She said: "It is indeed that; and we had already knowledgeable and we had been among the obedient." And those things stopped her which she had been worshipping besides God. She was from a disbelieving nation. (41-43)

She was told: "Enter the palace." Then when she saw the floor [of the palace], she thought it was deep water and bared her shanks. Solomon said: "This palace is made of crystal." She cried out: "Lord! I have remained unjust to myself. And now with Solomon I consign myself to God, Lord of the Worlds." (44)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا دَاوٗدَ وَسُلَيْمٰنَ عِلْمًا ۚ وَقَالَا الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ فَضَّلَنَا عَلٰى كَثِيْرٍ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٥﴾[14]

The word عِلْم (knowledge) refers to the wisdom and cognizance bestowed on David (sws) and Solomon (sws) that manifested themselves in "The Psalms" and "The Proverbs" and also to the knowledge of science. It was through this latter knowledge that they were able to establish that majestic kingdom which stood unrivalled in its

14. And We bestowed great knowledge on David and Solomon, and they said: "Gratitude be to God Who has granted us superiority over many of His believing servants."

times with regard to its military might both in the land and in the sea. Its details are mentioned in Sūrah al-Anbiyā'.

The words "and they said: 'gratitude be to God Who has granted us superiority over many of His believing servants,'" refer to the fact that in spite of being the rulers of the most powerful kingdom of that time and being the most formidable in scientific advancements, never for a moment did they conceitedly think that all this was because of their personal effort. On the contrary, they continued to be grateful to their Lord that all this honour and majesty was His blessing.

The words "granted us superiority over many of His believing servants," show that the real superiority is superiority in faith. A person who does not have it, has nothing. However, actual superiority is that God makes someone superior among His believing servants.

وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمٰنُ دَاوٗدَ وَقَالَ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ عُلِّمْنَا مَنْطِقَ الطَّيْرِ وَاُوْتِيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ۭ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿١٦﴾[15]

If Solomon (sws) was famous, his son David (sws) was even more so. I have explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Anbiyā' that besides his might in land forces, Solomon (sws) had also notched up great advancement in sea forces. His naval fleet was the most powerful of his time. It is evident from this verse and the succeeding ones that he also had the special skill to understand the language of the birds. He would use birds to deliver messages, bring information and spying in a very adept way. In this way, he had also developed an air force. However, in spite of having all this to his credit, he never claimed like mean people that he had become unassailable. In fact, the context of the verse clearly shows that when this grand addition was made in his military might, instead of showing conceit, he informed his nation that they have been blessed with the knowledge of the language of the birds and if they also have other means and resources needed for development, then this is a sheer blessing of God. In other words, he meant that it was their obligation to this manifest blessing of God to be grateful to Him to the utmost and take lead in being obedient to Him. In the Torah, Solomon (sws) has been portrayed as a mean and materialist king and even polytheism and idol worship are attributed to him. However, in the Book of Kings it is mentioned that he continued to regard his splendour and majesty to be God-given and also stressed upon his nation to show gratitude to God on His favour.

The verse clearly shows that birds have intellect and can converse and Solomon (sws) was given special knowledge of it. If we are not able to understand their conversation, this is not a reason to negate it. It is clearly mentioned in the Qur'ān that every object of the universe glorifies the Almighty but human beings do not understand it. Similarly, it has also been mentioned in the Qur'ān that all the beasts and birds are separate generations of species. In the exegesis of Sūrah al-Naḥl, I have

15. And Solomon became the heir to David and he said: "People! We have also been taught the language of the birds and also given all other things. Indeed, this is a manifest blessing."

explained these insinuations of this statement. Solomon (sws) was specially given the knowledge to understand the language of the birds; however, even those who do not have this knowledge know that all animals adopt different expressions in their lingos for hate, love, reprimand, affection, joy, worry, comfort, assurance and playfulness. Similarly, their gestures and body language for the expression of these sentiments is different. People who train animals for a special purpose understand their voices and gestures the way they understand the language of their own species. Even more knowledge of this lies with those who have scientifically observed these animal forms. If one reads the information they have gathered through their experience and knowledge, one is left to wonder in amazement that besides large animals, the wisdom and sharpness ants possess is so much that even human beings can learn a lot from them. No less amazing are the tasks of spying and searching which dogs are accomplished at. When human beings can discover such secrets of animals through their experiences and experimental science and can harness their abilities for these purposes, it is small wonder that God blessed Solomon (sws) with the special knowledge of bird-language. It may be kept in mind that a language comes into being through cadences and variations of sounds. Beings who possess cognizance, comprehension and sentiments express these through various sounds and it is through the variation of sounds that a langauge comes into being. Gestures are also included in this and can be dubbed as silent language.

وَحُشِرَ لِسُلَيْمٰنَ جُنُوْدُهٗ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ وَالطَّيْرِ فَهُمْ يُوْزَعُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾[16]

A governing noun is suppressed in the expression حُشِرَ لِسُلَيْمٰنَ. The implication is that all the army was assembled for the inspection of Solomon (sws).

The actual meaning of the word وَزْعٌ is to "to stop," "to grasp", "to hold." In verse 19, it is used in this meaning as well. However, when it is used in relation to any army, it means "to train" and to "to categorize."

This verse depicts a parade session of Solomon's (sws) army which was composed of the jinn, human beings and the birds. They were assembled for his inspection. The purpose of this assembly was to arrange and categorize them. The purpose of mentioning this parade, as will become evident later, was to show the amazing qualities its components possessed. However, when these qualities showed themselves in the real world, instead of being overcome with the pride of invincibility, he humbly bent down before his Lord and pleaded that the Lord should take hold of him lest he goes astray because of these favours for he wanted to remain His grateful servant.

حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ اَتَوْا عَلٰى وَادِ النَّمْلِ ۙ قَالَتْ نَمْلَةٌ يّٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّمْلُ ادْخُلُوْا مَسٰكِنَكُمْ ۚ لَا يَحْطِمَنَّكُمْ سُلَيْمٰنُ وَجُنُوْدُهٗ ۙ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾[17]

16. And all the army of Solomon – from among the jinn, humans and birds – were assembled for his inspection and they were being categorized!

The expression "valley of the ants" could refer to a specific place that is famous by this name and could also merely refer to a place where ants lived in abundance. Ants and other similar insects generally make their dwellings in places which are conducive to their living in every way.

This mention is of the time of the parade just referred to. When Solomon's forces marched to reach the valley of the ants, one of them informed her clan of the lurking danger. She cried out to them to enter their holes lest they are trampled into oblivion and the huge army does not even know what happened. Science has revealed amazing facts about ants. Notwithstanding these, even if a common person observes how one army of ants commutes from place to place, he is astounded to see their organization and military discipline. It is clearly evident that the whole army marches under the leadership of a chief. A line of scouts and volunteers flanks both sides of the army. It diligently marches within stipulated limits. It is clearly evident that they have been deputed the task of guarding the army. As soon as they smell danger, they, in their own limits, inform the army about it. At this, the army makes a strategy to protect itself. A very gripping scene can be observed when their whole colony decides to permanently relocate to a new destination. With it travels all supplies of their food as well as the young ones. Personally, I have intently observed this migration at times, and it may well become a whole account if I pen my observations.

These feats of the ants can be observed by all and sundry. However, we are left with no semblance of doubt after reading about their marvels unveiled by scientists that they too are an independent species and class of living organisms, as indicated by the Qur'ān. Some of their types resemble human beings: they raise certain animals for their own needs; they sow seeds in lands they demarcate and when the crop is ready, they preserve it underground. There is a whole system of training and instruction among them. In short, they have all the traits which human beings have. The only difference is physical structure, status and form.

The word "said" is used literally even though it has been used in the Qur'ān to refer to speak through gestures. An example of this latter use can be seen in verse 27 of Sūrah Maryam. It should be kept in consideration that ant-types are not confined to what we know in our own areas: scientific research has shown a host of other types found in different territories and terrains. Included among them are ants which are able to speak and others that are mute. Just as Solomon (sws) had the God-given skill to understand the language of the words, he could also comprehend the conversation of ants.

فَتَبَسَّمَ ضَاحِكًا مِّنْ قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ رَبِّ اَوْزِعْنِيْٓ اَنْ اَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِيْٓ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلٰى وَالِدَيَّ وَاَنْ اَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَّرْضٰىهُ وَاَدْخِلْنِيْ بِرَحْمَتِكَ

17. Until when they reached the valley of the ants, an ant said: "Ants! Enter your holes lest Solomon and his armies may trample you and they are not even aware of it."

فِيْ عِبَادِكَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿١٩﴾[18]

The word ضَاحِك connotes "joy and happiness," as in verse 71 of Sūrah Hūd. If only the word فَتَبَسَّمَ (to smile) was used, it could also have meant "a derisive smile." However, since it was qualified by the word ضَاحِك, it means "a joyous smile."

The word وَزِّعْنِيْ has been explained earlier. Here it means "to get hold" or "to grasp" someone in order to strengthen and stabilize him. Solomon (sws) prayed to God to get hold of him to prevent him from going astray, lest after being blessed with the skills of understanding the lingo of the birds and insects he is overcome with pride and vanity. He further prayed that he fulfils his obligations towards the favours God has bestowed on him and his parents, and he is able to do works that please Him and ends up among the righteous in the Hereafter.

It is to remind people of this fact that the above incident has been narrated: those whose vision is confined to this worldly life only and they are oblivious to God express pride and vanity on any success they may achieve; a necessary consequence of this arrogant attitude is that instead of expending the abilities and resources God had blessed them with in works that please Him, they start using them to achieve the aims of Satan. However, Solomon (sws) regarded all his scientific achievements to be a result of God's help and continued to be mindful of the fact that he may displease God in the slightest way.

وَتَفَقَّدَ الطَّيْرَ فَقَالَ مَالِيَ لَآ اَرَى الْهُدْهُدَ ۖ اَمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْغَآىِٕبِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ لَاُعَذِّبَنَّهٗ عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا اَوْ لَاَا۟ذْبَحَنَّهٗٓ اَوْ لَيَاْتِيَنِّيْ بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٢١﴾[19]

At the instance of his inspection of the parade, when Solomon (sws) could not find the lapwing, he uttered the above cited words in severe anger.

Before the expression "or is he among those absent" a clause to the effect "is it that he is present and I can't see him."

It is evident from this description that the army of Solomon (sws) consisted of different types of trained birds. He used them to gather information, deliver messages and spy on others. Since he understood the language of the birds, he was able to undertake these tasks in a far better way than the scientists of the present age.

Even in the present age, birds are used for this purpose. The Torah mentions nothing about this feat of Solomon (sws). However, it is mentioned in it that when Noah (sws) wanted to estimate the level of water after the deluge, he sent forth a dove. She came back with a fresh branch of olive in her beak. From this, Noah concluded that the

18. Thus he happily smiled at her words and prayed: "Lord! Give me the strength so that I remain grateful to You for Your favour which You have done to me and to my parents and I do such pious deeds which please you and with your blessing, admit me among your righteous servants."

19. And when he inspected the army of birds, he said: "What is it that I do not see the lapwing? Is he present or is he among those absent? I shall severely punish him or slaughter him unless he presents a convincing excuse before me."

water had receded.

This shows that training birds for the purposes outlined above was a skill found in ancient times, in fact from the beginning of history. The ability of a dove to deliver messages and letters is well known. It is evident from the details just referred to that doves are also very adept in estimating conditions and circumstances. Current scientific advancements also corroborate this fact. The lapwing was found in abundance in the land of Palestine. Like the dove, it is also very skilful for these tasks. For this reason, Solomon (sws) employed it for this purpose. The manner in which he has expressed his anger on the absence of the lapwing shows that these birds were required to follow a strict military discipline. They had to obey all the rules and any disobedience would lead them to punishment.

فَمَكَثَ غَيْرَ بَعِيْدٍ فَقَالَ اَحَطْتُّ بِمَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهٖ وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَاٍ بِنَبَاٍ يَّقِيْنٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ اِنِّيْ وَجَدْتُّ امْرَاَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ وَاُوْتِيَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَجَدْتُّهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُوْنَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيْلِ فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾[20]

The subject of the verb مَكَثَ is Solomon (sws) in my opinion. Soon, the lapwing arrived and presented him with the report mentioned in this verse. The territory of Sabā lies in the south west of Arabia where Ḥadrmawt and ‘Asīr are located. The lapwing did not imply that Solomon (sws) was totally unaware of that country and its circumstances. How can he be totally unaware of such a close by country when it is evident from both the Torah and the Qur'ān that the queen of Sabā was broadly aware of Solomon (sws) and his wisdom, as is referred to ahead. If she was aware, how can it be assumed that Solomon (sws) was not, given the fact that his naval fleet would journey to far off lands. What the lapwing actually meant was that he had returned with a fresh detailed report that will add to Solomon's information. This is also evident from the words "I am aware of that which you do not know," of this verse. The true stress of these words is that the lapwing came to Solomon (sws) with some further information. It should be evident that the lapwing has stated these words as an excuse for his absence. For this reason, he specified that he had brought news that was certain and also the latest. Such additions to the knowledge of their ruler are made by the envoys and informants of every country and have the capacity to do so. Thus this fresh news should not be construed as a means to put down the extent of information Solomon (sws) had.

The report presented by the lapwing to Solomon (sws) showed that a woman was ruling the land of Sabā and the style of the report reflects wonder. He informed Solomon (sws) that as far as the development of the country was concerned, it had

20. Not much time elapsed when the lapwing came and said: "I am aware of that which you do not know and I have brought true information for you from the country of Sabā. I saw a woman ruling them and everything is available to her and she has a very large throne. I have seen her and her nation worshipping the sun by leaving God. And Satan has made their deeds look fair to them; thus he has stopped them from the right path; so, they are not finding the way."

everything. Regarding the splendour of the queen, he reported that she had a huge throne. It should be kept in mind that the crowns and thrones of the kings of those times were adorned with gold, silver and other expensive metals. Thus their grand nature was measured through these means.

Regarding the religious milieu of the country, the lapwing reported that the queen and her people worshipped the sun and this sun worship and other acts of immorality had been made to seem fair to them by Satan. Such was this extent that worshipping the one God had become lost upon them.

اَلَّا يَسْجُدُوْا لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ يُخْرِجُ الْخَبْءَ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُخْفُوْنَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ اَللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٢٦﴾[21]

In my opinion, these two verses are not part of the lapwing's speech. These words are from God and examples of such insertions have occurred in the past *sūrahs*. By adding these words, the discourse has been related to the situation that existed in the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān in Arabia. The implication is that Satan stopped them from worshipping the God Who exposes all the is hidden in the heavens and the earth and is fully aware of what people conceal and what they reveal, and is master of the glorious throne.

Concomitant indications strongly support that these words are insertions from God and such is their obvious nature that they do not need any explanation. The words "knows what you conceal and what you reveal" are quite inappropriate to come out of the mouth of the lapwing. Only God can utter them.

The word الْخَبْءَ in يُخْرِجُ الْخَبْءَ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ connotes the meaning of مَخْبُوءٌ. In other words, it is God Who reveals all the hidden things of the heavens and the earth but the naïve worship other deities. By the hidden things of the heavens are specially meant the sun, the moon, the rain and to plants Venus and Mercury. The people of Sabā would worship the sun as the greatest deity. By the hidden things of the earth are specially meant things which sprout from it or come out from it like vegetation, trees, seas and fountains etc. It is stated that the creator and the master of all these things is God, the one and only and He knows whatever people reveal and what they conceal. So what is the point in worshipping other entities.

The words لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ allude to the fact that when God is the master of the glorious throne that extends over the heavens and the earth, then people should worship Him only. No throne however grand it may be has any worth before His throne.

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21. [Satan has stopped them from the right path] so that they do not prostrate before God Who makes known the hidden things of the heavens and the earth and knows what you conceal and what you reveal. There is no deity except God. He only is the Master of the glorious throne.

قَالَ سَنَنْظُرُ اَصَدَقْتَ اَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ اِذْهَبْ بِّكِتٰبِيْ هٰذَا فَاَلْقِهْ اِلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾[22]

Solomon (sws) handed over a letter to the lapwing for delivery to the queen to test whether he was merely boasting or if his claims were true. It is evident from this that the country of Sabā was already in Solomon's (sws) mind and it may well be that the lapwing had flown to it for this very reason. In the absence of any prior plans, it is seems improbable that Solomon (sws) should send a letter to them merely to judge the truthfulness of the lapwing. The nature of this letter is that of an ultimatum, as will become evident from later verses.

Solomon (sws) asked the lapwing to withdraw from there and wait after delivering the letter so that their response could be known. Some scholars think that this directive of Solomon (sws) to withdraw from the royal court while waiting was given to the lapwing because in his presence the courtiers would not be able to freely converse with one another and feel hesitant in the presence of a foreign envoy. This view does not seem to be correct. Though delivering messages and letters through birds was common in those times, there is no indication of the fact at least until that stage that the people of Sabā thought that a bird could understand their conversation too.

قَالَتْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمَلَؤُا اِنِّيْٓ اُلْقِيَ اِلَيَّ كِتٰبٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ اِنَّهٗ مِنْ سُلَيْمٰنَ وَاِنَّهٗ بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ﴿٣٠﴾ اَلَّا تَعْلُوْا عَلَيَّ وَاْتُوْنِيْ مُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾[23]

As soon as the letter was received, the queen immediately consulted her courtiers. Two things become evident from the way she introduced the letter.

Firstly, sending letters through birds was a common method in those times, at least to the extent of kings. Had this not been the case, both the queen her courtiers would have expressed amazement at a letter being delivered without a messenger. Neither did she express amazement nor her courtiers when the letter was received. On the contrary, the queen mentioned it as if it was something very common and the courtiers received it as a customary piece of news.

Secondly, the queen mentioned the letter as an honourable epistle. This shows that she and her courtiers already held Solomon (sws) in high esteem. Indications of this are also found in the Torah and the Talmūd, and they are also found in the succeeding verses of the Qur'ān.

The queen while summarizing the contents of the letter to her courtiers told them that the letter is from Solomon (sws) and begins with the name of the merciful God. In ancient times, it was customary that royal letters and decrees would begin by a mention of the name of the sender and to whom they are sent. Since the queen has not

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22. Solomon said: "We shall see whether you are telling the truth or you are among the liars. Take this letter of mine and deliver it to them and then draw away to see their reaction?"

23. She said: "Courtiers! I have been delivered a letter. It is from Solomon and it is 'with *bismillah al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*; do not show rebelliousness against me and come to me in obedience.'"

read out the complete text of the letter to her courtiers and had just summarized it, for this reason she only told them the name of the sender and the manner in which it began. This also sheds light on the history of the *bismillah al-raḥmān al-raḥīm* verse. It becomes evident that the queen gave special importance to the beginning of the letter and wanted her courtiers understand the underlying spirit of earnestness found in it.

The real purpose of Solomon's letter is then outlined in the set of verses under discussion: without showing any rebelliousness, the queen should submit to him.

Though concomitant indications show that the queen had presented a summary of the letter to her courtiers, yet this also is a fact that in ancient times letters and decrees were short and concise. This is also evident from the letters of Prophet Muḥammad (sws). So, it is quite possible that Solomon's letter contained merely the words she mentioned.

It is evident from the Book of Kings of the Torah that in his times either all the nearby countries had either submitted to Solomon (sws) of their own and started paying the tribute tax to him or had been annexed by him. The reason he undertook these conquests was that the greatest form of disorder on earth is the rule of people who adhere to polytheism and disbelief and to subdue then is an obligation of the believers. Thus on this basis Solomon (sws) demanded obedience from the people of Sabā and not take to rebelliousness lest it be harshly dealt with. The word مُسْلِمِيْنَ is used here to connote "obedience" and does not refer to accepting faith. A true Islamic government does not have the right to forcibly ask non-Muslims to accept faith but it does have the right to strip them of political authority because if any other law other than the law of God is allowed to prevail on earth, then this would lead to anarchy in the land and rebelliousness to God.

قَالَتْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمَلَؤُا اَفْتُوْنِيْ فِيْٓ اَمْرِيْ ۚ مَا كُنْتُ قَاطِعَةً اَمْرًا حَتّٰى تَشْهَدُوْنِ ﴿٣٢﴾[24]

The queen asked the counsel of her courtiers after disclosing its contents to them. Out of affection, she assured them hat she does not take a decision without consulting them. The reason behind this affection probably was that the queen did not want to wage war with Solomon (sws), as will become evident ahead. On the contrary, she wanted that her courtiers also agree with her.

It may be kept in mind that even in a dictatorial set-up, a king cannot ignore the opinions of his nobles. Even a person as autocratic as the Pharaoh needed to consult his courtiers and nobles. In a similar way, the queen too sought the counsel of her high-ups. It would be wrong to conclude from this that the queen's rule was a democratic one. What best can be said of it is that was an aristocratic rule and that too in a special sense.

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24. She said: "Courtiers! Give your opinion in this matter of mine. I do not take decisions unless you people are present."

قَالُوْا نَحْنُ اُولُوْا قُوَّةٍ وَّ اُولُوْا بَاْسٍ شَدِيْدٍ ۙ وَّ الْاَمْرُ اِلَيْكِ فَانْظُرِيْ مَاذَا تَاْمُرِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾[25]

The courtiers opined that if the queen decides to launch an onslaught on Solomon (sws), they were fully up to the task. She should take the decision. By the words اُولُوْا قُوَّةٍ the courtiers referred to their martial might and resources, and by اُولُوْا بَاْسٍ they indicated their astuteness and courage. These are the two things needed for war.

These words of the courtiers show that their inclination towards war, which they conveyed to their queen.

قَالَتْ اِنَّ الْمُلُوْكَ اِذَا دَخَلُوْا قَرْيَةً اَفْسَدُوْهَا وَ جَعَلُوْٓا اَعِزَّةَ اَهْلِهَآ اَذِلَّةً ۚ وَ كَذٰلِكَ يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾[26]

The queen did not concur with her courtiers. She was well aware of the extent of Solomon's might and power as well as his wisdom and sagacity. For this reason, she discouraged them from waging war and warned them of its consequences in the words cited in the verse. She said that Solomon (sws) will also treat them no differently than what kings do in humiliating their enemy. Her message was clear: war must be avoided at all cost.

وَ اِنِّيْ مُرْسِلَةٌ اِلَيْهِمْ بِهَدِيَّةٍ فَنٰظِرَةٌۢ بِمَ يَرْجِعُ الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾[27]

The queen suggested that they adopt a compromising policy and preferred to handle the matter through diplomatic means. By sending gifts to Solomon (sws), she wanted to gauge the response of her sincerity. The last clause of the verse (and see what reply my delegation brings back) indicates that the queen was not very hopeful of the outcome. She knew that Solomon (sws) would behave according to ideological principles. He will not be convinced through gifts and presents. However, she wanted to avoid war and a chalk out a way that was better for her and for her countrymen. This shows that she was a peace-loving ruler having insight of the future.

فَلَمَّا جَآءَ سُلَيْمٰنَ قَالَ اَتُمِدُّوْنَنِ بِمَالٍ ۫ فَمَآ اٰتٰىنِيَ اللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّآ اٰتٰىكُمْ ۚ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ بِهَدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾[28]

As per her plan, the queen sent gifts and presents to Solomon (sws) with a delegation. The singular tense of the verb جَآءَ is meant to collocate with the word

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25. They replied: "We are powerful and have great military might. The decision is in your hands. Thus deliberate what directive you may give."

26. She said: "When kings enter a city, they ravage it and humiliate the honourable in it, and these people will also do the same.

27. And I will send my delegation to him with gifts and see what reply my delegation brings back."

28. Then when the delegation reached Solomon, he said: "Do you want to help me through wealth? Whatever God has given me is far better than what He has given you. It is you people who are happy with your gifts."

delegation. The overall construction would be to the effect: فَلَمَّا جَآءَ مَن أُرْسِلَ اِلَيْهِ. It is evident from the words of both the queen and of Solomon (sws) cited ahead that a whole delegation came to meet him. However, he did not accept their gifts and asserted that he already has plenty of blessings from God, which are much more than what they have brought. The rather concise words فَمَآ اٰتٰىنِۦَ اللّٰهُ encompass wealth, status, and wisdom as well as the empire Solomon (sws) had.

The implication of these words of Solomon (sws) was that his demand was that the queen and her people submit to him; he is not desirous of friendship so that these gifts would make him happy; they may rejoice in wealth and riches, which he has much more; however, his purpose was to make God's directives prevail in the land; it was not permissible for him to rejoice with these gifts and accept the rule of disbelief and polytheism in God's earth.

اِرْجِعْ اِلَيْهِمْ فَلَنَاْتِيَنَّهُمْ بِجُنُوْدٍ لَّا قِبَلَ لَهُمْ بِهَا وَلَنُخْرِجَنَّهُمْ مِّنْهَآ اَذِلَّةً وَّهُمْ صٰغِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾[29]

These words state the response of Solomon (sws). He intended to decimate the power of the queen and subject her countrymen to disgrace.

The word قِبَل means: "power and strength." Solomon (sws) knew through the report brought back by the lapwing that the courtiers of the queen were very proud of their means and resources and of their valour and bravery. For this reason, he informed them that all their pride and vanity will be shattered in front of his own army.

The word اَذِلَّةً is qualified by the expression وَّهُمْ صٰغِرُوْنَ. This refers to the fact that such will be the humiliating manner in which Solomon's army would expel them from their land that they will be disgraced in their own eyes. At times, a nation is vanquished in war but courage does not abandon it. These words of Solomon (sws) imply that such will be the manner in which they shall be routed that they will never even think of waging war again.

قَالَ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمَلَؤُا اَيُّكُمْ يَاْتِيْنِيْ بِعَرْشِهَا قَبْلَ اَنْ يَّاْتُوْنِيْ مُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾[30]

After sending back the delegation, Solomon (sws) was quite sure that these people would not be audacious enough to wage war and would soon come over to submit to him. However, before this could happen he wanted to completely over-awe the queen and her courtiers. Thus he made up his mind to bring over the throne of the queen so highly praised by the lapwing. For this, he asked the question cited in this verse.

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29. "Go back to those people. We shall attack them with armies they will not be able to face and We shall disgracefully expel them from there and they will end up humiliated."

30. Solomon said: "Courtiers! Which of you can bring her throne to me before they come to me in obedience?"

قَالَ عِفْرِيْتٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ اَنَا اٰتِيْكَ بِهٖ قَبْلَ اَنْ تَقُوْمَ مِنْ مَّقَامِكَ ۚ وَاِنِّيْ عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٌّ اَمِيْنٌ ﴿۳۹﴾[31]

The word عِفْرِيْتٌ means "astute and clever." At the same time, it also connotes someone who is physically strong and someone who is a leader.

It has been mentioned at another instance in the Qur'ān that Solomon (sws) was also blessed with the skill of bringing the jinn into his subservience. As a result, he had deputed many of them in running the affairs of his country. When he expressed the desire mentioned in the verse, not only a clever jinn positively responded to it, he was also assured by that jinn that since he is powerful and honest, Solomon (sws) need not worry: the task would be faithfully accomplished by him.

قَالَ الَّذِيْ عِنْدَهٗ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ اَنَا اٰتِيْكَ بِهٖ قَبْلَ اَنْ يَّرْتَدَّ اِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ ؕ فَلَمَّا رَاٰهُ مُسْتَقِرًّا عِنْدَهٗ قَالَ هٰذَا مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّيْ ۫ لِيَبْلُوَنِيْٓ ءَاَشْكُرُ اَمْ اَكْفُرُ ؕ وَمَنْ شَكَرَ فَاِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ رَبِّيْ غَنِيٌّ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿۴۰﴾[32]

When the jinn made the offer cited earlier, a person who had knowledge of the book was inspired to make his own offer which this verse mentions. He even accomplished the offer.

The word book obviously refers to the Torah. In other words, that person had profound knowledge of that aspect of the Torah which I have already pointed out while explaining the incident of Hārūt and Mārūt in Sūrah al-Baqarah: this knowledge relates to the affects of the letter and words and also of God's attributes. It was given to these two angels to combat witchcraft and sorcery in the times when the Israelites were under detention in Babylon. This knowledge was like a double-edged sword and a wrong use of it could lead people to great trial and misery. Thus it has been mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah that the angels regarded it to be a trial. In the time of Solomon (sws), none dared to misuse this skill for fear of stern accountability. Yet the same *sūrah* specifies that after him the Jews profusely used it. They lost interest in studying the Torah and began using it for evil purposes and tried to convince their people that Solomon's majesty and splendour depended on this occult discipline.

This discipline is not part of the Torah or other divine books and is totally apart from them. It was given to the Israelites in a certain period for a specific purpose, as is pointed out in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Here the words الَّذِيْ عِنْدَهٗ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ are only meant to point to the fact that besides obtaining the knowledge of Book and

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31. A fierce individual from among the jinn said: "I shall bring it to you before you leave this gathering of yours. And I have the power to accomplish this task and I am also trustworthy."

32. A person who had knowledge of the Book said: "I shall bring it to you before you blink your eye." Then when Solomon saw it placed in front of him, he cried out: "This is my Lord's blessing so that He may test me whether I am grateful to him or ungrateful. And he who expresses gratitude does it for his own benefit and he who was ungrateful, then my Lord is Self-Sufficient and Gracious."

sharī'ah of God, another skill can be obtained which can overpower the chants and incantations of the devils among the jinn and men.

When Solomon (sws) saw that the throne of the queen had in fact been brought to his presence, he was overcome with gratitude to God. To bring it over, neither did he undertook any effort of his own nor did he need to call in any jinn or devil for support; on the contrary, this feat was achieved through the words and letters of God's names. He knew that this was a trial from God – a trial that was meant to see whether he becomes arrogant after this achievement or remains God's humble and grateful servant. Since God is gracious, He never deprives people of His favours who do not use them against Him.

قَالَ نَكِّرُوْا لَهَا عَرْشَهَا نَنْظُرْ اَتَهْتَدِيْٓ اَمْ تَكُوْنُ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾[33]

Solomon (sws) did not merely want the throne to be brought over; he actually wanted to demonstrate his God-given majesty before the queen and her nobles. He wanted to surprise the queen; she would definitely be struck with amazement to see her own throne with him. This was a type of a jest: he ordered his staff to make a general change in the form of the throne so that it became an enigma for the queen and Solomon (sws) wanted to see whether she was able to resolve that enigma or not.

فَلَمَّا جَآءَتْ قِيْلَ اَهٰكَذَا عَرْشُكِ ؕ قَالَتْ كَاَنَّهٗ هُوَ ۚ وَاُوْتِيْنَا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا وَكُنَّا مُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾[34]

Once the delegation returned to the queen after the failed mission, she decided to directly meet with Solomon (sws). It is evident from the Torah and the succeeding verses of this *sūrah* also that the queen was very impressed by Solomon (sws). She now made up her mind to go and meet him to not only benefit from his wisdom and knowledge but also to find a solution to her political crisis. Thus with many of her nobles and high-ups she came over to meet him. Here she was faced with the puzzle mentioned above. She was dumbfounded to see her own throne when she was asked about it. It was with great caution that she confessed this fact. At the same time, she acknowledged that they were already aware of the superiority and splendour of Solomon (sws) and that they had already submitted to him in their hearts. The antecedent of the pronoun in مِنْ قَبْلِهَا is the miraculous feat she had just observed. It is also evident from the words of the queen that it was not just herself who was impressed by Solomon's knowledge and wisdom, many of her viziers and courtiers too were over-awed by them. This is quite logical too. In fact, it is quite probable that it was they who would have accompanied the queen in this trip.

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33. Solomon ordered: "Change the shape of her throne; let us see whether she recognizes it or becomes among those who are not able to recognize it."

34. So, when she arrived, she was asked: "Is your throne similar to this?" She said: "It is indeed that; and we had already knowledgeable and we had been among the obedient."

وَ صَدَّهَا مَا كَانَتْ تَّعْبُدُ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهَا كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۴۳﴾[35]

Here the Qur'ān has explained that why in spite of being so impressed by Solomon's knowledge and wisdom and in spite of becoming obedient to him, she persisted in following the wrong religion: she and her disbelieving people continued to worship idols. The implication is that not every person can break the shackles of traditions and national relationships. There are many people to whom the truth is apparent but they are so caught up in the clutches of their environment that they do not have the courage to liberate themselves from it. Only people who are blessed with a special urge from the Almighty are able to lift these heavy stones found in their way. Though everyone faces this difficulty but for those who are entrusted with leadership, this difficulty is double – in fact, ten times. They become absolute slaves of their times. Though they claim to be leaders but when they walk, they walk behind others.

قِيْلَ لَهَا ادْخُلِي الصَّرْحَ ۚ فَلَمَّا رَاَتْهُ حَسِبَتْهُ لُجَّةً وَّ كَشَفَتْ عَنْ سَاقَيْهَا ؕ قَالَ اِنَّهٗ صَرْحٌ مُّمَرَّدٌ مِّنْ قَوَارِيْرَ ؕ قَالَتْ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِيْ وَ اَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمٰنَ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۴۴﴾[36]

After this, the attendants of Solomon (sws) asked the queen to enter the palace. As soon as she did, she was wonderstruck and thought that she was entering a deep well of water and bared her clothers from her shanks. At that instant, he disclosd that the floor was made of crystal beneath which pure water was running.

The purpose of this mention is to depict the architectural might and majesty of Solomon (sws). A queen of the stature and spendour of the queen of Sabā' could not believe her eyes, and her actions clearly showed that she had witnessed this sight for the first time.

It seems as if the floor of the palace was made of thick slabs of glass and water was flowing below it. For this reason, when a stranger stepped on its floor, he thought that he was landing into a fountain. When a villager enters the buildings and palaces of a developed society, he faces similar amazement. Such was the splendour of Solomon's palace that even the queen of Sabā became a villager, let alone common villagers. Solomon's wisdom and knowledge as well as the majesty and splendour of his palace had such a profound influence on the queen that she spontaneously exclaimed her submission to God together with Solomon (sws). By this declaration, she expressed her subservience to them. It is evident from this that the crystal palace was also a sign

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35. And those things stopped her which she had been worshipping besides God. She was from a disbelieving nation.

36. She was told: "Enter the palace." Then when she saw the floor [of the palace], she thought it was deep water and bared her shanks. Solomon said: "This palace is made of crystal." She cried out: "Lord! I have remained unjust to myself. And now with Solomon I consign myself to God, Lord of the Worlds."

of God. With it was the brilliance of being a penitent, grateful and faithful servant of God that Solomon (sws) was. People are guided by this and instead of overwhelming eyes, it blesses them with insight. If this is not present, then it is a sign of conceit and arrogance and an abode of darkness even if someone calls it a "White House."

It should be kept in mind regarding this crystal palace that it had been constructed neither through public funds or loans nor at the cost of his poor subjects. It was constructed at the time when the whole nation had become very affluent. Such was the extent of this affluence that it is mentioned in the Torah that gold was found in such abundance that silver had lost its value. It will further become evident from the exegesis of Sūrah Sabā that Solomon (sws) had not merely constructed palaces and halls for the royalty, he had also made places of providing free food to the needy. Nevertheless, architectural marvels are not something bad in themselves. Just as there is nothing wrong in the splendour of servitude together with the majesty of the kingdom, in a similar way, there is nothing wrong in the affluence of the subjects together with marvels of construction. If there is anything wrong, it is is in the imbalance of these things, and only extremely upright people can shield themselves from it.

The tale of the queen of Sabā is not mentioned in detail in the Torah; yet reproduced below is the essential part of her account so that the similarity between the Qur'ān and the Torah becomes evident:

> When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relationship to the LORD, she came … arriving at Jerusalem with a very great caravan—with camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones—she came to Solomon and talked with him about all that she had on her mind … When the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon and the palace he had built, the food on his table, the seating of his officials, the attending servants in their robes, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he made at the temple of the LORD, she was overwhelmed. She said to the king, "The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard. How happy your people must be! How happy your officials … King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired and asked for, besides what he had given her out of his royal bounty. Then she left and returned with her retinue to her own country. (1Kings: 10, 1-13)

It is evident from these words that after that the queen went back to her country. This seems quite logical and there is nothing in the Qur'ān against it. She submitted to Solomon (sws) both in politics and in religion; many of her nobles and officials

were in agreement with her; she was the sole ruler of her country and was also very popular among her subjects. It is quite in line with this background that what must have happened was that she started to govern her country according to the principles Solomon (sws) told her. Some narratives found in books of exegesis show that he had married her, but this does not seem true. These narratives are also not reliable as regards their chains of narration.

Section IV: Verses (45-58)

In the previous verses, the accounts of the Pharaoh's rebelliousness, Solomon's gratitude and uprightness of the queen of Sabā are narrated. It has also been shown what fate arrogance meets and what reward is given to gratitude and humility. In the succeeding verses, the anarchy created by two ancient nations of the Arabs – the Thamūd and the nation of Lot (sws) – as well as their fate is referred to. The purpose is to make the Quraysh realize that they should not think that like the earlier examples the events related belonged to the far off lands of Egypt, Palestine and Yemen; on the contrary, they should also learn a lesson from the fates of nations that lived in their own land; even at that time, the ruins of those nations narrate the fate of arrogance and haughtiness.

In this background, readers may study the succeeding verses.

Text and Translation

وَلَقَدۡ اَرۡسَلۡنَاۤ اِلٰی ثَمُوۡدَ اَخَاهُمۡ صٰلِحًا اَنِ اعۡبُدُوا اللّٰهَ فَاِذَا هُمۡ فَرِیۡقٰنِ یَخۡتَصِمُوۡنَ ﴿۴۵﴾ قَالَ یٰقَوۡمِ لِمَ تَسۡتَعۡجِلُوۡنَ
بِالسَّیِّئَةِ قَبۡلَ الۡحَسَنَةِ ۚ لَوۡلَا تَسۡتَغۡفِرُوۡنَ اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تُرۡحَمُوۡنَ ﴿۴۶﴾ قَالُوا اطَّیَّرۡنَا بِكَ وَبِمَنۡ مَّعَكَ ؕ قَالَ
طٰٓئِرُكُمۡ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ بَلۡ اَنۡتُمۡ قَوۡمٌ تُفۡتَنُوۡنَ ﴿۴۷﴾
وَكَانَ فِی الۡمَدِیۡنَةِ تِسۡعَةُ رَهۡطٍ یُّفۡسِدُوۡنَ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ وَلَا یُصۡلِحُوۡنَ ﴿۴۸﴾ قَالُوۡا تَقَاسَمُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ لَنُبَیِّتَنَّهٗ وَ
اَهۡلَهٗ ثُمَّ لَنَقُوۡلَنَّ لِوَلِیِّهٖ مَا شَهِدۡنَا مَهۡلِكَ اَهۡلِهٖ وَاِنَّا لَصٰدِقُوۡنَ ﴿۴۹﴾ وَمَكَرُوۡا مَكۡرًا وَّمَكَرۡنَا مَكۡرًا وَّهُمۡ لَا
یَشۡعُرُوۡنَ ﴿۵۰﴾ فَانۡظُرۡ كَیۡفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ مَكۡرِهِمۡ ۙ اَنَّا دَمَّرۡنٰهُمۡ وَقَوۡمَهُمۡ اَجۡمَعِیۡنَ ﴿۵۱﴾ فَتِلۡكَ بُیُوۡتُهُمۡ خَاوِیَةًۢ بِمَا
ظَلَمُوۡا ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیَةً لِّقَوۡمٍ یَّعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۵۲﴾ وَاَنۡجَیۡنَا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَكَانُوۡا یَتَّقُوۡنَ ﴿۵۳﴾ وَلُوۡطًا اِذۡ قَالَ لِقَوۡمِهٖۤ
اَتَاۡتُوۡنَ الۡفَاحِشَةَ وَاَنۡتُمۡ تُبۡصِرُوۡنَ ﴿۵۴﴾ اَئِنَّكُمۡ لَتَاۡتُوۡنَ الرِّجَالَ شَهۡوَةً مِّنۡ دُوۡنِ النِّسَآءِ ؕ بَلۡ اَنۡتُمۡ قَوۡمٌ
تَجۡهَلُوۡنَ ﴿۵۵﴾ فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوۡمِهٖۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ قَالُوۡۤا اَخۡرِجُوۡۤا اٰلَ لُوۡطٍ مِّنۡ قَرۡیَتِكُمۡ ۚ اِنَّهُمۡ اُنَاسٌ یَّتَطَهَّرُوۡنَ ﴿۵۶﴾

فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَاَهْلَهٗۤ اِلَّا امْرَاَتَهٗ ۫ قَدَّرْنٰهَا مِنَ الْغٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿۵۷﴾ وَاَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَّطَرًا ۚ فَسَآءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنْذَرِيْنَ ﴿۵۸﴾

And to the Thamūd, We had sent their brother Ṣāliḥ as a messenger with the message: "People! Worship God." So, by becoming two factions, they began arguing with one another. Ṣāliḥ said: "O People of My Nation! Why do you show haste for evil before good? Why do you not ask for God's forgiveness that mercy be shown to you?" (45-46)

They replied: "We regard all this to be a result of bad luck from you and your companions." Ṣāliḥ said: "Your bad luck is with God. In fact, you are being put to test." (47)

And there were nine families in the city that would spread disorder in the land and were not prepared to mend their ways. They made a promise by swearing upon God: "We shall secretly kill him and his people at night; then tell his heir: 'We have nothing to do with his killing and we are absolutely truthful.'" And they also plotted a plan and We also chalked out a scheme, and they did not even know. Then see the fate of their scheme! We destroyed them and their whole nation. So, these are their houses, ruined because they were unjust to themselves. Indeed, there is a great lesson in it for those who want to know. And We saved those people who had accepted faith and used to fear God. (48-53)

And We had sent Lot also as a messenger. When he said to his nation: "Do you engage in this vulgar act with open eyes? Do you fulfil your sexual desire from men leaving aside women? In fact, you are totally overwhelmed with frenzy." But the only answer his nation gave was: "Turn out Lot and his people from your settlement; these people pose as very noble." So, We saved him and his people except his wife; We had counted her among those left behind. And We unleashed on them a horrible shower. Then how terrible was the rain for those who had been informed. (54-58)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَاۤ اِلٰى ثَمُوْدَ اَخَاهُمْ صٰلِحًا اَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ فَاِذَا هُمْ فَرِيْقٰنِ يَخْتَصِمُوْنَ ﴿۴۵﴾[37]

The undisputed nature of the invitation given to his people in this verse was met with deaf ears. Instead of welcoming it, some people did profess faith in Ṣāliḥ, but many miscreants took to vehemently opposing it. In this way, the nation became divided into two groups and both began arguing with one another.

قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لِمَ تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ ۚ لَوْلَا تَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿۴۶﴾[38]

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37. And to the Thamūd, We had sent their brother Ṣāliḥ as a messenger with the message: "People! Worship God." So, by becoming two factions, they began arguing with one another.

38. Ṣāliḥ said: "O People of My Nation! Why do you show haste for evil before good? Why do you not ask for God's forgiveness that mercy be shown to you?"

A common way to counter the true calls of a messenger, as has been become evident from a number of instances in the Qur'ān, is that his people demand to observe the punishment a messenger warned them of. They contend that only then will they regard the messenger as truthful and profess faith. The people of Ṣāliḥ behaved no differently. He earnestly called them to God's mercy but they demanded to see His scourge instead of asking for His mercy by repenting from their sins. Concomitant indications show that the word سَيِّئَةٌ here means "punishment and scourge" and حَسَنَةٌ means "repentance that is rewarded through God's mercy." It may be kept in mind that in this phase, Prophet Muḥammad's (sws) nation had also adopted the same attitude. They too demanded that if the fate of denying his message was destruction, they should be shown a sign of this destruction; only after that will they believe that the Qur'ān is God's book and its presenter is His messenger. In other words, it is as if through the tongue of Ṣaliḥ (sws) these people are told that they should not demand rocks if they are being given bread. The fate of such people was very exemplary and it would be their utter wretchedness if they do not learn a lesson from it.

قَالُوا اطَّيَّرْنَا بِكَ وَبِمَنْ مَّعَكَ ۭ قَالَ طٰۗىِٕرُكُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُفْتَنُوْنَ ۝[39]

While explaining an established practice of God under verse 94 of Sūrah al-A'rāf, I have mentioned that in the times of God's messengers such trials specially manifest themselves as create humility and penitence in people so that their hearts are inclined towards the call of their messenger. They must take these trials as forewarnings: if they do not believe in him they will be faced with the decisive punishment he is warning them of. These measures are taken by God to make it conducive for people to accept a messenger's call. However, instead of benefiting from it, two attitudes are adopted by them. Either they assure themselves from the misconceived notion of their leaders that such good and bad circumstances generally befall every nation and have nothing to do with acceptance or denial of anything; or they regard the messenger and his companions to be a source of these calamities and as a bad luck brought to them. What they meant was that since these people are opposing their deities and the religion of their forefathers, they are being punished by these deities and elders and they too are being meted out a share from this.

It has been stated earlier that several examples of these trials have been mentioned in earlier *sūrahs*. Here, in this verse, it has been indicated that when God inflicted them with various trials in accordance with His established practice so that they are inclined to the call of the messenger and so that they fear that if they deny the messenger they will in fact be punished, then instead of paying heed to these warnings, they behaved even more stubbornly. They started to say that Ṣāliḥ (sws) and

39. They replied: "We regard all this to be a result of bad luck from you and your companions." Ṣāliḥ said: "Your bad luck is with God. In fact, you are being put to test."

his companions are responsible for this bad luck that they have been inflicted with.

The implication is that how can such obdurate people be reformed: if the punishment does not come, they demand its sign; if a sign is shown to them, they regard it to be bad luck brought by the messenger and his companions.

The words طَيَّرْ and طٰٓئِرٌ have been explained under verse 131 of Sūrah al-A'rāf. Here the latter word means "share and fate." The implication is that the actual source of these calamities is God's decision and wisdom. They are trials of God and not ill-omen brought by them. By putting them through these trials, He is assessing if they have any ability of accepting the truth or just deserve to be destroyed.

وَكَانَ فِي الْمَدِيْنَةِ تِسْعَةُ رَهْطٍ يُّفْسِدُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾[40]

The word رَهْط means "tribe and family." This word has been mentioned in verse 19 of Sūrah Hūd during the account of Shu'ayb (sws). It is evident from its usage that it connotes both singular and plural entities. Thus those who have translated it as "person" have made a mistake.

In this verse, the power and might of the miscreants is stated: there were nine families in the city, all of whom opposed Ṣāliḥ's call. Thus he was confronted with danger from all sides as these families continued to spread disorder in the land and were not prepared to mend their ways at any cost. The sole way to this reform is to worship God and show obedience to Him and towards this end did God's messengers call their people. Thus opposing this call is tantamount to disorder in the land.

قَالُوْا تَقَاسَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ لَنُبَيِّتَنَّهٗ وَاَهْلَهٗ ثُمَّ لَنَقُوْلَنَّ لِوَلِيِّهٖ مَا شَهِدْنَا مَهْلِكَ اَهْلِهٖ وَاِنَّا لَصٰدِقُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾[41]

In my opinion تَقَاسَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ is a *badal* (permutative) ie. all the miscreants of the above mentioned families mutually swore to kill Ṣāliḥ (sws) and his clan and family secretively and then deny the charges if an heir claims them. The reason that this scheme was chalked out to be carried out in a clandestine way was because they feared openly killing him would create a persistent dispute with his family. It may be kept in mind that in tribal areas killing a person was not an easy affair. This would often result in an unending series of war and revenge between the tribes. To avoid this danger, a secret scheme of stoning Ṣāliḥ (sws) to death was hatched. At the same time, it was planned that everyone will have a share in this execution so that this secret it not exposed; and if it is, then seeing their large number, the heirs of Ṣāliḥ (sws) do not dare to embark upon retaliation. A very similar scheme was made by the Quraysh in

40. And there were nine families in the city that would spread disorder in the land and were not prepared to mend their ways.

41. They made a promise by swearing upon God: "We shall secretly kill him and his people at night; then tell his heir: 'We have nothing to do with his killing and we are absolutely truthful.'"

the Dār al-nadwah against Muḥammad (sws) so that a joint action of killing discourages any revenge. At this stage, Muḥammad (sws) has been narrated this incident to inform him that his enemies are also involved in or will soon hatch a similar conspiracy against him. However, just as God protected Ṣāliḥ (sws) and his companions, He will also protect him and his companions.

وَمَكَرُوْا مَكْرًا وَّ مَكَرْنَا مَكْرًا وَّ هُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿۵۰﴾ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ مَكْرِهِمْ ۙ اَنَّا دَمَّرْنٰهُمْ وَ قَوْمَهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿۵۱﴾[42]

The scheme plotted by these miscreants has been mentioned earlier. To combat it, the scheme of he Almighty has been mentioned in Sūrah al-Shu'arā' and some of the earlier *sūrahs*. This verse also alludes to it.

فَتِلْكَ بُيُوْتُهُمْ خَاوِيَةً ۢ بِمَا ظَلَمُوْا ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۵۲﴾ وَ اَنْجَيْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ كَانُوْا يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿۵۳﴾[43]

The demonstrative pronoun تِلْكَ shows that the Quraysh are being reminded of something close by. This was because the ruins of the majestic buildings of the Thamūd are present in their own land for them to seek a lesson. It may be kept in mind that the Thamūd were from the remnants of the 'Ād, and for this reason had inherited their feats of construction. The caravans of the Quraysh would pass by their ruins every now and then. The expression بِمَا ظَلَمُوْا is actually to the effect بِمَا ظَلَمُوْا أَنْفُسَهُم. In other words, they met this fate by denying Ṣāliḥ as a result of being unjust to their own souls.

In the expression اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ, the verb signifies intention. In other words, those who have the intention of knowing and understanding will find a message in this account. However, those who have no such intention will never be influenced by any counsel.

Verse 54 mentions those who were protected by God. A special attribute of theirs is pointed out here: they feared God's justice and revenge.

وَلُوْطًا اِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهٖۤ اَتَاْتُوْنَ الْفَاحِشَةَ وَ اَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿۵۴﴾[44]

This verse is coordinated to the incident mentioned earlier. The sense would be: لُوْطًا أَرْسَلْنَا (We sent forth Lot). The word الْفَاحِشَةَ means such open acts of lewdness whose vulgarity is undisputed. An explanation of this is mentioned ahead.

The words وَ اَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُوْنَ imply that it can be understandable to stumble into sins that

42. And they also plotted a plan and We also chalked out a scheme, and they did not even know. Then see the fate of their scheme! We destroyed them and their whole nation.

43. So, these are their houses, ruined because they were unjust to themselves. Indeed, there is a great lesson in it for those who want to know. And We saved those people who had accepted faith and used to fear God.

44. And We had sent Lot also as a messenger. When he said to his nation: "Do you engage in this vulgar act with open eyes?"

are not open. However, indulging in them in such an open and blatant way by those blessed with eye shows how wretched and blind people are. It can be an excuse for a blind person to step into filth, but what is their excuse to step into it when they have eyes to see it?

اَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَاْتُوْنَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّنْ دُوْنِ النِّسَآءِ ؕ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُوْنَ ﴿۵۵﴾[45]

The interrogative nature of the sentence is to meant to express wonder and amazement. The qualifying clause "leaving aside women," shows that how blind these people are. In spite of a natural and religiously sanctioned way of satisfying sexual desire being available to them, if they are adopting this way, then this shows that their nature have been perverted. It has been explained at an appropriate instance that the word جَهْل also means to be overcome with emotions and frenzy to such an extent that a person loses his intellectual ability.

فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهٖۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ قَالُوْۤا اَخْرِجُوْۤا اٰلَ لُوْطٍ مِّنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ ۚ اِنَّهُمْ اُنَاسٌ يَّتَطَهَّرُوْنَ ﴿۵۶﴾[46]

These people could not have fabricated an argument in favour of this blatant vulgarity but were also not willing to give it up. Thus the only solution left for them was to somehow do away with Lot's warnings. The leaders of the nation inveigled their people into expelling him and his companions from the land. The poison found in the words اِنَّهُمْ اُنَاسٌ يَّتَطَهَّرُوْنَ (these people pose as very noble) is not hidden for those who have a literary taste. In order to emotionally charge their people against Lot (sws) and his companions, they started to say that these people regard the whole nation to be a bunch of rogues and ruffians barring their own selves who are the few righteous ones left. When an evil becomes an epidemic, such poisonous statements can be very effective in condemning the ones raising their voice against it. If anyone has any doubt, he can witness its veracity by uttering a few words against indecent attire in women's gatherings of today.

It has been explained at other instances of this exegesis that the word اٰلَ constitutes both family and followers of a person.

فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَاَهْلَهٗۤ اِلَّا امْرَاَتَهٗ ۫ قَدَّرْنٰهَا مِنَ الْغٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿۵۷﴾[47]

The word اَهْل also refers to both family and followers of a person. The words قَدَّرْنٰهَا مِنَ الْغٰبِرِيْنَ (We had counted her among those left behind) do not merely show that

45. "Do you fulfil your sexual desire from men leaving aside women? In fact, you are totally overwhelmed with frenzy."

46. But the only answer his nation gave was: "Turn out Lot and his people from your settlement; these people pose as very noble."

47. So, We saved him and his people except his wife; We had counted her among those left behind.

Lot's wife was not saved, they also allude to the fact that God specially made her a target of the stone-hurling wind meant for Lot's nation. The reason is that she was more worthy of God's wrath when in spite of being a prophet's wife her sympathies remained with her wretched nation. People who have more opportunities to be guided from God will face a sterner punishment if they do not give due importance to this guidance. The extent of accountability a person has before God is commensurate to the favours he is blessed with.

وَاَمۡطَرۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ مَّطَرًا ۚ فَسَآءَ مَطَرُ الۡمُنۡذَرِيۡنَ ﴿۵۸﴾[48]

While Lot (sws) and his companions were saved, the rest of the nation was decimated by a shower of stones, the details of which have been mentioned in earlier *sūrahs*. The words فَسَآءَ مَطَرُ الۡمُنۡذَرِيۡنَ (then how terrible was the rain for those who had been informed) allude to the fact that this terrible rain was a consequence of denying God's messenger when he had conclusively communicated the truth to them. When they remained deaf and blind even after this, they deserved to be stoned to death and buried in the earth.

It may be kept in mind that like of dwellings of the Thamūd, the settlements of the nation of Lot (sws) were also located along the travel-routes of the Quraysh. For this reason, these two nations are specially mentioned in this *sūrah* to direct their attention towards them.

Section V: Verses (59-93)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. The results of the incidents mentioned earlier are delineated in them. In particular, the message of monotheism of the Qur'ān is emphatically presented. Arguments drawn from the world within a person and that outside him in favour of this belief are put forth. Moreover, the real reason of denial of the disbelievers is stated. It is their reluctance about the hereafter even though it is an established fact. These arguments openly testify to it. The opening verses of the *sūrah* also discuss this issue. In this way, its opening and closing verses are mutually linked.

Within these verses as well as right at the end, the Prophet (sws) is specially sounded assurance: he should ignore the demands and objections these people are presenting to deny him and the Qur'ān; he cannot make the blind and deaf see and hear; he should clearly convey to them that his sole responsibility is to communicate the Qur'ān to them; it is up to them to accept or reject it; if they do not accept it, they

48. And We unleashed on them a horrible shower. Then how terrible was the rain for those who had been informed.

will face every single consequence the Qur'ān is warning them of.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ وَسَلٰمٌ عَلٰى عِبَادِهِ الَّذِيْنَ اصْطَفٰى ؕ آٰللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ اَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۵۹﴾

اَمَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَاَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۚ فَاَنْۢبَتْنَا بِهٖ حَدَآئِقَ ذَاتَ بَهْجَةٍ ۚ مَا كَانَ لَكُمْ اَنْ تُنْۢبِتُوْا شَجَرَهَا ؕ ءَاِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ؕ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ يَّعْدِلُوْنَ ﴿۶۰﴾ اَمَّنْ جَعَلَ الْاَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَّ جَعَلَ خِلٰلَهَآ اَنْهٰرًا وَّ جَعَلَ لَهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَ جَعَلَ بَيْنَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ حَاجِزًا ؕ ءَاِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ؕ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۶۱﴾ اَمَّنْ يُّجِيْبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ اِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوْٓءَ وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ الْاَرْضِ ؕ ءَاِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۶۲﴾ اَمَّنْ يَّهْدِيْكُمْ فِيْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْبَرِّ وَ الْبَحْرِ وَمَنْ يُّرْسِلُ الرِّيٰحَ بُشْرًا ۢ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ ءَاِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ؕ تَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۶۳﴾ اَمَّنْ يَّبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ وَمَنْ يَّرْزُقُكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ ءَاِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ؕ

قُلْ هَاتُوْا بُرْهَانَكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۶۴﴾

قُلْ لَّا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ؕ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ اَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿۶۵﴾ بَلِ ادّٰرَكَ عِلْمُهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ ۫ بَلْ هُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهَا ۫ بَلْ هُمْ مِّنْهَا عَمُوْنَ ﴿۶۶﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا ءَاِذَا كُنَّا تُرٰبًا وَّ اٰبَآؤُنَآ اَئِنَّا لَمُخْرَجُوْنَ ﴿۶۷﴾ لَقَدْ وُعِدْنَا هٰذَا نَحْنُ وَ اٰبَآؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۙ اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿۶۸﴾ قُلْ سِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿۶۹﴾

وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُنْ فِيْ ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۷۰﴾ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۷۱﴾ قُلْ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ رَدِفَ لَكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذِيْ تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ ﴿۷۲﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُوْ فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۷۳﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُوْرُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُوْنَ ﴿۷۴﴾ وَمَا مِنْ غَآئِبَةٍ فِي السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ اِلَّا فِيْ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿۷۵﴾

اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَقُصُّ عَلٰى بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اَكْثَرَ الَّذِيْ هُمْ فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿۷۶﴾ وَ اِنَّهٗ لَهُدًى وَّ رَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۷۷﴾ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِيْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِحُكْمِهٖ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿۷۸﴾ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّكَ عَلَى الْحَقِّ

الْمُبِيْنِ ﴿٧٩﴾ اِنَّكَ لَا تُسْمِعُ الْمَوْتٰى وَلَا تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَآءَ اِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِيْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَمَآ اَنْتَ بِهٰدِى الْعُمْيِ
عَنْ ضَلٰلَتِهِمْ ؕ اِنْ تُسْمِعُ اِلَّا مَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَهُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَاِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ اَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ
دَآبَّةً مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ تُكَلِّمُهُمْ ۙ اَنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا لَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ مِنْ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ فَوْجًا مِّمَّنْ
يُّكَذِّبُ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَهُمْ يُوْزَعُوْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءُوْ قَالَ اَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِاٰيٰتِىْ وَلَمْ تُحِيْطُوْا بِهَا عِلْمًا اَمَّا ذَا كُنْتُمْ
تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَوَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمَا ظَلَمُوْا فَهُمْ لَا يَنْطِقُوْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾

اَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا جَعَلْنَا الَّيْلَ لِيَسْكُنُوْا فِيْهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا ؕ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾
وَيَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِى الصُّوْرِ فَفَزِعَ مَنْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنْ فِى الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا مَنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَكُلٌّ اَتَوْهُ دٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾
وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَّهِىَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ ؕ صُنْعَ اللّٰهِ الَّذِىْٓ اَتْقَنَ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ ؕ اِنَّهٗ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا
تَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ مَنْ جَآءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهٗ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهَا ۚ وَهُمْ مِّنْ فَزَعٍ يَّوْمَئِذٍ اٰمِنُوْنَ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَمَنْ جَآءَ
بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَكُبَّتْ وُجُوْهُهُمْ فِى النَّارِ ؕ هَلْ تُجْزَوْنَ اِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٠﴾ اِنَّمَآ اُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَعْبُدَ رَبَّ هٰذِهِ
الْبَلْدَةِ الَّذِىْ حَرَّمَهَا وَلَهٗ كُلُّ شَىْءٍ ۫ وَّاُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَاَنْ اَتْلُوَا الْقُرْاٰنَ ۚ فَمَنِ
اهْتَدٰى فَاِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِىْ لِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَقُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُنْذِرِيْنَ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ سَيُرِيْكُمْ
اٰيٰتِهٖ فَتَعْرِفُوْنَهَا ؕ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾

Tell them: Gratitude is for God and peace and blessings be on His servants whom He chose. Is God better or those things they associate with Him? (59)

[Are these deities of yours better] or He Who created the heavens and the earth and brought down water for you from the sky. Thus from it We sprouted beautiful orchards. It was not possible for you to make their trees sprout? Is there any other deity also with God? In fact, it is these are the people who have deviated from the path of truth. (60)

[Are these idols of yours worthy of gratitude] or He Who made the earth a place of dwelling and made streams to flow between it and for this created mountains and placed a barrier between two seas? Is there any other deity with God also? In fact, most of their people do not know. (61)

[Are your partners of God worthy of worship] or He Who listens to the oppressed when he calls Him and relieves him from his grief and makes you the heir of the earth? Is there another deity also with God? Very seldom you people receive a

reminder! (62)

[Are these deities of yours besides God worthy of worship] or He Who guides you in the darkness of the land and the sea and Who sends winds as glad tidings before His rain of mercy? Is there another deity with God also? God is far superior from the things which they associate with Him. (63)

[Are your alleged deities worthy of worship] or He Who initiates creation; then will do it again and Who provides sustenance to you from the heavens and the earth? Is there another deity with God also? Say: Bring your argument if you are truthful. (64)

Say: Whoever are in the heavens and earth, none except God has knowledge of the Unseen and they do not even know when they will be raised to life. (65)

In fact, their knowledge of the Hereafter is inflicted with confusion; in fact, they are in a doubt from it; in fact, they have become blind from it. And these disbelievers say: "When we and our forefathers too become dust, will we be taken out again? We have also been threatened of it and before us our forefathers too. These are only tales of the ancients." (66-68)

Tell them: Roam about in the land and observe the fate of the wrongdoers. (69)

And do not grieve on them nor worry about the schemes they are plotting. And they ask: "When will this threat materialize if you are truthful?" Say: It is quite possible that a part you are seeking to hasten is right behind you. And indeed, your Lord blesses people but most of them are ungrateful. And your Lord fully knows what their chests conceal and whatever they reveal. And there is not a hidden thing in the heavens and the earth which is not written in an open register. (70-75)

Indeed, this Qur'ān is also explaining many things to the Israelites in which they are differing. And it is guidance and mercy for those who believe. Indeed, your Lord through His decisive directive shall definitely decide between them, and He is Powerful and Knowledgeable. So, trust God; indeed, it is you who are on the absolute truth. (76-79)

You cannot make the dead hear nor make your call reach the deaf when while turning their backs they are running away. And nor can you drive the blind out of their error. You can only make those listen who profess belief in Our revelations. Thus only they will become obedient. (80-81)

And when the word is fulfilled for them, We shall bring out for them an animal from the earth which will tell them that people did not have conviction in Our revelations. And remember the day when from each *ummah* We shall gather a whole army of people who used to deny Our revelations. Thus they will be categorized. Until when they gather together, God will ask: "Did you deny My revelations even though your knowledge could not embrace them or: 'What had you been doing?'" And the word shall be fulfilled for them because they had been unjust to their souls; thus they would not be able to say anything. (82-85)

Have they not seen that We have made the night dark so that they can rest in it and made the day radiant so that they may do work in it? Indeed, there are signs in this for

those who want to believe. (86)

And keep in mind the day on which the trumpet is blown; so, whatever is in the heavens and in the earth all will be gripped by fear. Only they will remain secure about whom God wills and all will come before him in submission. And observing the mountains, you think that they are firmly implanted whereas they will be flying about like clouds. This will be the work of the God Who has made everything solidly. Indeed, He knows everything that you do. Those who bring virtue, for them is a better reward than it and on that day they shall remain secure from every worry. And those who bring vice will be cast into Hell headlong: "You are getting the same in return to what you have been doing." (87-90)

I have only been directed to worship the Lord of this city Who has made it sacred and in whose authority is everything. And I have been directed to remain among His obedient and to read out the Qur'ān. Then he adopts the path of guidance, will do it for his own benefit alone and he who chooses to go astray, say: I am only a warner and say: Gratitude is for God alone. And He will show His signs to you; so you will recognize them and your Lord is not unaware of whatever you are doing. (91-93)

Explanation

قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ وَسَلٰمٌ عَلٰى عِبَادِهِ الَّذِيْنَ اصْطَفٰى ۭ آللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ اَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ۝[49]

The nature of this verse in relation to the previous and forthcoming verses is that of an eloquent digression and an exquisite connection. Two things become clear from the incidents that have been cited earlier.

Firstly, after creating this world, God has not become aloof and disconnected from its affairs. In fact, the signs of his justice and mercy continue to manifest themselves in it. He has sternly punished the rebellious, and also kept on helping His chosen ones.

Secondly, all authority and control in the hands of the God Who has no peers. All others who are worshipped besides him do not exist. When the time comes, they will neither be able to save themselves from God nor their worshippers.

Now the verse under discussion after summarizing these two facts is paving the way for the sermon on monotheism which is coming up. It is stated that the Prophet (sws) should tell those who are denying him and the Book he is presenting that the anecdotes that have been narrated to them clearly show that only God is worthy of gratitude; He is the one Who has shown them these marvels of His justice and mercy and shown that peace and salvation is for those whom He selects for preaching the truth and for serving humanity; however much the Prophet's enemies may try, they will not be able to harm him and his companions. God protects them. It is they who achieve the dominance of truth over falsehood.

After that, it is stated that if this is the truth that becomes evident from the historical

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49. Tell them: Gratitude is for God and peace and blessings be on His servants whom He chose. Is God better or those things they associate with Him?

anecdotes cited, then the Prophet (sws) should ask them: Is the God Whose majesty has been stated worthy of worship and gratitude or the their alleged deities and intercessors which can neither help their own selves nor those who worship them. The next verse digresses from what is just stated to pave the way for the discussion on monotheism in the succeeding verses.

اَمَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَاَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۚ فَاَنْۢبَتْنَا بِهٖ حَدَآىِٕقَ ذَاتَ بَهْجَةٍ ۚ مَا كَانَ لَكُمْ اَنْ تُنْۢبِتُوْا شَجَرَهَا ؕ ءَاِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ؕ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ يَّعْدِلُوْنَ ﴿۶۰﴾[50]

In order to understand the stress in this verse and the succeeding ones, readers may direct their attention to a linguistic style that has often been referred to in this exegesis. Questions as the ones cited in this verse are not meant to elicit an answer. They are meant for rebuke and conclusive communication. The speaker adopts an emphatic way to present facts in a persistent manner without waiting for a response from the addressees. It is as if there is no possibility of negating these facts. In order to create this emphasis, parts of a sentence are suppressed. They can be understood by the addressees themselves. This vacuum in the sentences is filled by the emphasis employed by the speaker in communication. Such examples of suppression can be abundantly seen in the sermons and speeches of the orators of the classical period. However, citing them in front of the Qur'ān is like lighting a candle before the sun. Since this style of communication is not found in Urdu, I have stated in words these suppressions.

Before the words اَمَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ (or He Who created the heavens and the earth) a part is suppressed to effect: Speak up! If those of your deities are better who have neither any share in creating and governing this universe nor in your nourishment and upbringing or the Being Who has created the heavens and the earth and sent down water for you from which He has produced beautiful orchards for you.

In the expression فَاَنْۢبَتْنَا بِهٖ حَدَآىِٕقَ ذَاتَ بَهْجَةٍ (thus from it We sprouted beautiful orchards), the style has changed. Earlier what was stated was indirect while here the speaker has been specified. This change in style is to express favour and affection.

The words ءَاِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ (is there any other deity also with God?) express a question whose obvious answer is in the negative. The implication is that then on what basis do they worship them. Here it may be kept in mind what has been repeatedly mentioned in this exegesis that the idolaters always regarded God to be the creator of the heavens and the earth as well as the controller of the winds and the clouds.

The word يَعْدِلُوْنَ is from عدل يعدل عدولا. It means "to be unjust and to oppress." In

50. [Are these deities of yours better] or He Who created the heavens and the earth and brought down water for you from the sky. Thus from it We sprouted beautiful orchards. It was not possible for you to make their trees sprout? Is there any other deity also with God? In fact, it is these are the people who have deviated from the path of truth.

other words, these people do not have any argument in favour of their deities; but they are deviants who do not value the truth. For this reason, they worship others besides God. It may also be kept in mind that in the earlier section the addressees were directly spoken to; here the style has changed to indirect. This is meant to express hate and dislike as well longing. It is as if what is said is stated while turning away from the addressees.

اَمَّنْ جَعَلَ الْاَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَّ جَعَلَ خِلٰلَهَآ اَنْهٰرًا وَّ جَعَلَ لَهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَ جَعَلَ بَيْنَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ حَاجِزًا ؕ ءَاِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ؕ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۶۱﴾ [51]

Here too the first part of the question is suppressed. The word قَرَار means a place of comfort and tranquillity. At other instances, the earth has also been called a cradle and a bed. Here too it has the same meaning.

Just as the Almighty sent down rain from the heavens for the consumption for mankind, in a similar way, He made seas and streams flow in the earth. In order to keep the earth in its orbit, He also implanted mountains in it.

It is specified at other instances in the Qur'ān that there are seas of sweet and sour water. These two water types come into contact with each other at God's behest but they always remain separate through an invisible barrier between them. Neither of the two not the slightest cross this barrier. It is then stated that do their deities have any share in this power, wisdom, providence, harmony between opposing elements and in this balance and harmony created by God. If the answer is obviously in the negative, then on what basis are they ascribe partners to Him. The last part of the verse is indirect. This style is meant to express sorrow and yearning. The implication is that all these things are so obvious but it is a matter of sorrow that most of them do not know this, and even after being told so they do not want to know.

اَمَّنْ يُّجِيْبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ اِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوْٓءَ وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ الْاَرْضِ ؕ ءَاِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۶۲﴾ [52]

Here too a similar question is suppressed before the verse, as can be seen in the earlier ones: are their deities who can neither listen nor hear, neither able to give benefit nor inflict harm, neither respond to calls not able to help the oppressed in any way better than God. In other words, it is actually God Who listens to these calls and respond and not these deities. It may be kept in mind that this topic is discussed at other instances of the Qur'ān in a way that it is qualified by God's will. This means

51. [Are these idols of yours worthy of gratitude] or He Who made the earth a place of dwelling and made streams to flow between it and for this created mountains and placed a barrier between two seas? Is there any other deity with God also? In fact, most of their people do not know.

52. [Are your partners of God worthy of worship] or He Who listens to the oppressed when he calls Him and relieves him from his grief and makes you the heir of the earth? Is there another deity also with God? Very seldom you people receive a reminder!

that God alleviates the sufferings and hardships of the ones His intention and wisdom entail. If at times, the supplication of an oppressed soul is not immediately answered, it is deferred to a more appropriate time. And if it is not answered in the way the person wants, God may respond to it in the manner He wants which may be even better for that person. Similarly, at times, this supplication will be a source of reward for that person in the Hereafter if it is not answered in this world. This part of the verse should be understood in the light of these principles.

The style of the expression وَيَجۡعَلُكُمۡ خُلَفَآءَ الۡاَرۡضِ refers to the replacement of one nation by another. The implication is that when this happens in this world, it is not accidental. No one except God can bring about this change. All this occurs in accordance with His directive and wisdom. This in fact is a warning to the Quraysh that if today they have political authority in this land, it is not because of their own effort; in fact, it is a blessing of God. He is testing them by granting them this authority. If they too adopt the same attitude as the ones before them who spread disorder in the land, they will meet the same fate. The dealing of God is the same for everyone.

The expression ءَاِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَلِيۡلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُوۡنَ implies that which of these works of God can they ascribe to others? The fact is that these people have forgotten their own selves and seldom pay heed to reminders. In other words, when they are faced with trials and hardships in this world, they call upon God. However, as soon as they pass away, they forget God and spend their lives in self-oblivion; they do not even remember that there was a time when they had called upon God and made some promises. This topic has been discussed at other instances in detail. It is similarly implied that the lesson they should seek from the historical record of rise and fall of nations is only paid heed to by them when they themselves are faced with these trials. And once these trials pass away, they become a tale of the past. It thus becomes evident that there is a deep meaningful connection between the two parts: وَيَجۡعَلُكُمۡ خُلَفَآءَ الۡاَرۡضِ and اَمَّنۡ يُّجِيۡبُ الۡمُضۡطَرَّ اِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكۡشِفُ السُّوۡٓءَ of this verse. The implication is that they neither seek a lesson from the trials they face in their individual lives nor from the change and replacement of nations. So, who can teach people who have such a weak memory!

اَمَّنۡ يَّهۡدِيۡكُمۡ فِىۡ ظُلُمٰتِ الۡبَرِّ وَالۡبَحۡرِ وَمَنۡ يُّرۡسِلُ الرِّيٰحَ بُشۡرًا ۢ بَيۡنَ يَدَىۡ رَحۡمَتِهٖ ؕ ءَاِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ؕ تَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ عَمَّا يُشۡرِكُوۡنَ ﴿۶۳﴾ [53]

A similar question is again suppressed before this verse as the ones in earlier verses. The Qur'ān at a number of places has stated the arrangement made by God to guide people in their sea and land travels. Thus in verse 16 of Sūrah al-Naḥl it is stated: وَعَلٰمٰتٍ

53. [Are these deities of yours besides God worthy of worship] or He Who guides you in the darkness of the land and the sea and Who sends winds as glad tidings before His rain of mercy? Is there another deity with God also? God is far superior from the things which they associate with Him.

وَبِالنَّجۡمِ هُمۡ يَهۡتَدُوۡنَ (and people also find their way through the stars). Thus the Almighty has planted signs in the land and suspended lamps in the heavens which guide travellers in their sea and land journeys. This bears clear evidence to the fact that the God of this universe is very merciful and affectionate and only His dominion extends in the heavens and the earth and in the sea and the land. It is He Who sends seasonal winds as mercy and glad tidings when the land has become dry. These winds gather pieces of clouds in layers. Then they rain down water wherever He directs them to. As a consequence, can anyone say that the heavens and earth, winds and clouds have different gods? The implication is that even after observing harmony between various components of the Universe, if anyone believes that it is being governed by different entities and there are deities that are God's partners, then he is a very naïve person. The creator of this Universe is exalted and far above these hypothetical deities. Such baseless and unfounded trivia have no match with God.

اَمَّنۡ يَّبۡدَؤُا الۡخَلۡقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيۡدُهٗ وَمَنۡ يَّرۡزُقُكُمۡ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ ءَاِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ؕ قُلۡ هَاتُوۡا بُرۡهَانَكُمۡ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ صٰدِقِيۡنَ ﴿۶۴﴾[54]

Here again a part of the sentence is suppressed which is evident from concomitant indications. The words ثُمَّ يُعِيۡدُهٗ explain an obvious consequence of initiation of creation: He can also create once again and, in fact, will necessarily do it. If He does not, this would mean that the whole universe is a meaningless creation. At other instances, this conclusion is stated with arguments that when no one can deny that God initiated this Universe, how can anyone deny that He can recreate it.

The words وَمَنۡ يَّرۡزُقُكُمۡ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ indicate that after creation, it is God Who makes arrangements for the sustenance and nourishment of His creatures. For this purpose, He uses both the heavens and the earth. From the former, He rains down water and from the latter He produces various crops. Can they claim that He has partner in these tasks?

The words قُلۡ هَاتُوۡا بُرۡهَانَكُمۡ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ صٰدِقِيۡنَ imply that whatever has been stated all need a creator, without whose power and wisdom they cannot come into being. Thus, it is evident from this that a living and sustaining God's existence is validated through indubitable facts. The verse invites the addressees that they too should profess faith in Him, and if they claim that there are other deities besides Him, then the burden of proof lies on them. If they have any reasoning in their favour, they should it bring it forth.

The aforementioned discussion can be summarized by saying that he who does not believe in God should give satisfactory answers to the above mentioned questions. If he believes in God, but associates other deities with Him, then he should present an

54. [Are your alleged deities worthy of worship] or He Who initiates creation; then will do it again and Who provides sustenance to you from the heavens and the earth? Is there another deity with God also? Say: Bring your argument if you are truthful.

argument in its support. The onus of proof nevertheless lies on the disbelievers and the idolaters. Those who believe in God do not have the responsibility of proving Him. He is an obvious reality.

قُلْ لَّا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ۭ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ اَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾[55]

The verse states the final word between monotheism and polytheism: if anyone is under this misconception that there is some one else also who has knowledge of the unseen of the heavens and the earth thus making him eligible of worship, the Prophet (sws) should dispel this misconception and affirm that this knowledge rests with God only. When even those in the heavens are unaware of this knowledge, what to speak of those in the earth! They do not even know when they will be raised to life, let alone the knowledge of the unseen. In the hope of intercession, how can such deities be worshipped who are devoid of this knowledge? This subject has been treated at length under verses 20-21 of Sūrah al-Naḥl.

بَلِ ادّٰرَكَ عِلْمُهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ ۣ بَلْ هُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهَا ۣ بَلْ هُمْ مِّنْهَا عَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾[56]

The word ادّٰرَكَ is actually an assimilated form of تَدَارَكَ similar to إِثَّاقَلَ and تَثَّاقَلَ. The expression تَدَارَكَ الْقَوْمُ would mean that the earlier and later people of the nation have intermingled with one another. At another instance, it is said: حَتّٰٓى اِذَا ادَّارَكُوْا فِيْهَا جَمِيْعًا (until all of them are gathered in it, (7:38)). From here, the meaning of mix-up and confusion has been incorporated into it. This is because when different things come together, they get jumbled.

It has been explained at an appropriate place that the idolaters of Arabia did not reject the Hereafter outright. In fact, they were inflicted with a type of confusion about it. They did not want to believe it and at the same time could not find a pretext to totally reject it. For this reason, they were in a state of uncertainty. Though some blunt and carefree people had rejected it out of frenzy, yet this was not the general situation. It was, as indicated, a mental confusion. Since it was their desire to deny it, they regarded it to be far-fetched and improbable. They would contend that how could it be possible for someone to recreate people after they die and their bones are decayed, and then subject all the world to reward and punishment. However, they were not fully convinced of this too. For this reason, they would say that if ever they are raised to life after death and have to face accountability, their deities will save them through their intercession. They need not worry. It is this mental conflict which the Qur'ān has termed as ادّٰرَكَ عِلْمُهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ. This is a very realistic expression for them. It is strange that

55. Say: Whoever are in the heavens and earth, none except God has knowledge of the Unseen and they do not even know when they will be raised to life.

56. In fact, their knowledge of the Hereafter is inflicted with confusion; in fact, they are in a doubt from it; in fact, they have become blind from it.

our exegetes have ended up in confusion in the interpretation of these words.

The implication of this verse is exactly the same as that of verse 5. It was said there that though this Qur'ān is absolutely clear, those who do not believe in the Hereafter nor want to do so will not profess belief in this Book. In a similar way, after refuting polytheism and affirming monotheism though indisputable arguments, it is stated here that it should not be construed that these clear and lucid arguments are not being understood by them; the real reason is that they are in a severe mental conflict regarding the Hereafter. They are in fact in perplexed about it; more so, have become blind to it.

It is a fact that the real reason to negate the reality is aversion to the Hereafter. Since belief in it entails huge responsibilities on a person, he wants to run away from it. Since he is unable to do so, he tries to find subterfuges. This creates a severe mental conflict in him and he tries to doubts facts to evade them. This unnatural effort inflicts him with the ailment of doubt. The result is that he has to become blind to blatant facts.

It is as if the Qur'ān here has unveiled the gradual progression of their malady: they polluted their mind and thinking because they wanted to evade the Hereafter; once they were inflicted with this pollution, they had to shut their eyes to all the signs found within them and outside them because facing them would heavily weigh down upon them.

وَ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا ءَاِذَا كُنَّا تُرٰبًا وَّ اٰبَآؤُنَآ اَىِٕنَّا لَمُخْرَجُوْنَ ﴿۶۷﴾ لَقَدْ وُعِدْنَا هٰذَا نَحْنُ وَ اٰبَآؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۫ اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿۶۸﴾ [57]

These verses explain the nature of their doubt and conflict: in the first place, they find it very strange to be raised to life again once they die and decay in the earth; secondly, they say that the threat of the Hereafter is nothing new for them; their forefathers too were similarly threatened. It neither came nor will it ever come. From this, they deduce that all these are tales of the ancients which are repeated in every age and have nothing to do with reality.

قُلْ سِيْرُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿۶۹﴾ [58]

This verse states the remedy to their blindness just referred to. The implication is that they will only see if they open their yes. So, they must walk about in their land and learn a lesson from the fate of earlier nations. They will then observe the signs of the punishment with which God's messengers threatened their people. God has preserved these signs in the earth for the very purpose that they serve a reminder to them. It will then become evident to them that this threat is not a hoax; it is a bare

57. And these disbelievers say: "When we and our forefathers too become dust, will we be taken out again? We have also been threatened of it and before us our forefathers too. These are only tales of the ancients."

58. Tell them: Roam about in the land and observe the fate of the wrongdoers.

fact; what will further become evident to them will be that if this was the fate of the wrongdoers in this world, why will God not bring a day in which His perfect justice and complete mercy manifest themselves.

وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُنْ فِيْ ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾[59]

The Prophet (sws) is assured in this verse. He is giving them bread to eat and they are replying in such a harsh way. This is their own wretchedness. He should fulfil his obligation and then leave them to themselves. He should not fret on them and feel sorrow on their stubbornness.

Similarly, he should not worry about the pranks they are playing with him and his companions. None of their tricks can trick God. Whenever He wants, He will rout them and save the believers from these vile schemes.

وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ قُلْ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ رَدِفَ لَكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذِيْ تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُوْ فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾[60]

The word رَدِفَ occurs without any preposition as well as with the preposition ل. Examples of both are found in classical Arabic. It means "something coming behind or after another thing."

The Almighty has warned the nations of messengers from two punishments: one in this world which necessarily visits them if they deny these messengers and one in the Hereafter. These nations always responded to these warnings by asking about the time of this punishment of the Hereafter if the claim is true; if it is not possible to bring this punishment for these messengers, then they should at least bring forth the worldly punishment which as claimed necessarily visits the nation who denies its messenger. Either of the two should be shown to them in the absence which they will not regard the promise of the messengers to be true.

The words "you are seeking to hasten" refer to punishment of the Day of Judgement. It has also been mentioned in verse 68 and verse 71 above. The word "a part" refers to the worldly punishment which is the necessary consequence of denying a messenger. They are told that they should not seek to hasten the punishment. At this moment, its arrival depends on their attitude: if they do not profess faith, a sample from the final punishment will visit them. Its arrival is a requisite of a messenger's denial. The word عَسٰى is stated here to show that this punishment hinges on the attitude of the nation. It could have remained secure by professing belief. Thus the majority of Muḥammad's (sws) nation accepted faith and was thereby secured from any worldly

59. And do not grieve on them nor worry about the schemes they are plotting.

60. And they ask: "When will this threat materialize if you are truthful?" Say: It is quite possible that a part you are seeking to hasten is right behind you. And indeed, your Lord blesses people but most of them are ungrateful.

punishment that visited earlier nations.

The last verse expresses sorrow on the attitude of people who were hastening the two punishments: if God gives respite to people, it is out of His mercy so that people can benefit from it by mending their ways and proving themselves worthy of it. However, such is the misfortune of people that they regard this time of respite and mercy to be a proof of the messenger being a hoax. Thus instead of earning His mercy, they earn His wrath from the same place.

وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُوْرُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُوْنَ ﴿۷۴﴾ وَمَا مِنْ غَآئِبَةٍ فِی السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ اِلَّا فِیْ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِیْنٍ ﴿۷۵﴾[61]

These words sound assurance to the Prophet (sws) and warning to his opponents. He should feel no danger from them because his Lord knows the hidden machinations of people as well as their open declarations. The implication is that He will deal with every mischief they create. This in fact lays emphasis on what is sated in verse 70 earlier.

The last part of the verse is a threat for the Prophet's rivals: they should bear in mind that all the secrets of the heavens and the earth are written in an open register with Him. He will take notice of everything and no secret can be hidden from him.

اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ یَقُصُّ عَلٰی بَنِیْۤ اِسْرَآءِیْلَ اَكْثَرَ الَّذِیْ هُمْ فِیْهِ یَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿۷۶﴾ وَاِنَّهٗ لَهُدًی وَّ رَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ ﴿۷۷﴾ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ یَقْضِیْ بَیْنَهُمْ بِحُكْمِهٖ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِیْزُ الْعَلِیْمُ ﴿۷۸﴾[62]

This is in reference to the Jews though primarily it is stated in response to the Quraysh. This is because in the initial stages of the Prophet's preaching, his rivals other than the Quraysh like the Jews were silent spectators. However, with the passage of time, the Jews started to secretly support the Quraysh. Thus the Qur'ān commented on them as well. Initially, they were only vaguely referred to. However, when they gradually started to be more open, the Qur'ān also started to discuss them more openly until at one time they were totally exposed. The verses under discussion refer to them rather concisely. In the forthcoming *sūrahs*, this will culminate into a more comprehensive mention. In the previous chapters also, the Jews have been discussed in a similar way.

The verse states that just as this Qur'ān is conclusively conveying the truth to the Ishmaelites, similarly, it is also explaining many facts to the Israelites from which they deprived themselves because of disputing them. If they profess faith in the Qur'ān, it will lead them out of this labyrinth of differences onto the straight path and

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61. And your Lord fully knows what their chests conceal and whatever they reveal. And there is not a hidden thing in the heavens and the earth which is not written in an open register.

62. Indeed, this Qur'ān is also explaining many things to the Israelites in which they are differing. And it is guidance and mercy for those who believe. Indeed, your Lord through His decisive directive shall definitely decide between them, and He is Powerful and Knowledgeable.

will be a means of mercy to them both in this world and in the Hereafter. However, if they do not duly recognize the worth of the Qur'ān and not accept its guidance, they should remember that today the Almighty wants to resolve their differences through this Book; however, after this, a day will also come in which He will resolve these through His decisive directive. Clear concomitant indications show that what has been said relates to the Day of Judgement. The word "directive" refers to that final verdict after which no one will be able to say anything.

The verse ends on God's attributes. The Jews should remember that God is powerful and knowledgeable. Neither can anyone stop Him nor is anything hidden from Him.

This subject is discussed in a similar context and occasion in Sūrah Yūnus in the following words:

وَلَقَدْ بَوَّاْنَا بَنِيٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ مُبَوَّاَ صِدْقٍ وَّرَزَقْنٰهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ ۚ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوْا حَتّٰى جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ ۭ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِيْ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيْمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ (١٠: ٩٣)

We provided the Israelites with a place of honour and blessed them with Our pure sustenance. Then they differed in knowledge after being bestowed with it. Indeed, on the Day of Judgement, your Lord will decide the matters in which they have been differing. (10:93)

In Sūrah Hūd, this subject is referred to thus:

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ فَاخْتُلِفَ فِيْهِ ۭ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيْبٍ (١١:١١٠)

And We gave the Book to Moses; then a difference was created in it. Had a matter not been decided earlier by your Lord, the issue would have been settled between them. In reality, they are in a confounding doubt about it. (11:110)

The difference referred to here has been explained under these verses at their respective places, and also in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. It should be kept in mind that the Torah was not only subjected to interpolation, it is also an amalgam of conflicting narratives. It is impossible to know from it which part is true and which has been altered. As a result of this adulteration in the Torah, the Jews had been engulfed by darkness after being deprived of this radiance by God. The Qur'ān wanted to lead them out of this darkness into light. However, instead of valuing this light, they tried to put it out.

فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَي اللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّكَ عَلَي الْحَقِّ الْمُبِيْنِ ۝ اِنَّكَ لَا تُسْمِعُ الْمَوْتٰى وَلَا تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَاۗءَ اِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِيْنَ ۝ وَمَآ اَنْتَ بِهٰدِ الْعُمْيِ عَنْ

ضَلٰلَتِهِمْ ؕ اِنْ تُسْمِعُ اِلَّا مَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَهُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾[63]

The Prophet (sws) is assured here that while totally disregarding the machinations and opposition of these people, He should trust His Lord's support; he alone is on the path of the truth, which is destined to prevail; his rivals, whether they are the Quraysh or the Jews, would not be able to succeed against him through their evil schemes; God will bring all their plans to nothing; His word is bound to dominate.

The Prophet (sws) is then told that if these people do not listen to him, he should not worry about them. His responsibility is not to make the dead and deaf hear especially when they have turned away to flee. It is evident from this that if they do not turn away and intently listen to what is being said, they will be able to make out what is being said. However, not only are they deaf, they are also running away. How can such wretched be made to hear something.

The preposition عَنْ in وَمَآ اَنْتَ بِهٰدِى الْعُمْىِ عَنْ ضَلٰلَتِهِمْ shows that the word هٰدِى encompasses a meaning that collocates with this preposition. Since عَنْ signifies making something turn away from something, the expression would mean: "You cannot turn away the blind from their error and lead them to guidance." The last part of the verse thus states that the Prophet (sws) can make only those people hear his call who want to believe in God's revelations. The verb in يُّؤْمِنُ بِاٰيٰتِنَا expresses intention. Examples of this usage can be seen in earlier *sūrahs*. The implication is that how can those value the Qur'ān who do not want to hear and understand. Those who want to hear and understand will indeed accept faith and become obedient to their Lord.

It is a fact that God has bestowed everyone with the urge to seek guidance. It is His established practice that those who duly value this urge are guided further by Him. Those who do not do so are not only deprived of further guidance, their natural desire to seek this guidance also fades away. Jesus (sws) while explaining this reality is reported to have said: "Even what they have is taken away from them." (Matthew, 13:12)

وَاِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ اَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ دَآبَّةً مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ تُكَلِّمُهُمْ ۙ اَنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا لَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿۸۲﴾[64]

The words وَ اِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ mean that when the verdict of God will be declared in this matter and what they deserve in accordance with the established practice of God will manifest itself.

The antecedent of the pronoun in عَلَيْهِمْ is the Quraysh who are addressed in this *sūrah*. They were demanding that they will not believe in the punishment or in the

63. So, trust God; indeed, it is you who are on the absolute truth. You cannot make the dead hear nor make your call reach the deaf when while turning their backs they are running away. And nor can you drive the blind out of their error. You can only make those listen who profess belief in Our revelations.

64. And when the word is fulfilled for them, We shall bring out for them an animal from the earth which will tell them that people did not have conviction in Our revelations.

Hereafter the Qur'ān is informing them of unless they see these or a observe a sign of them. This demand has been mentioned in verses 71-73 earlier.

The word تُكَلِّمُهُمْ is in the same meaning as it is in the following verse:

اَمْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطٰنًا فَهُوَ يَتَكَلَّمُ بِمَا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يُشْرِكُوْنَ. (۳۰:۳۵)

Or have We also revealed an argument to them that is bearing witness to what they associate with God? (30:35)

It is obvious that the word تَكَلَّمُ is not used in its common meaning of speech. It actually means to bear witness or present a sign in favour of something.

The verse says that it is not at all difficult for God to show them such a sign. He is actually giving them respite to repent and mend their ways. For this reason, He is teaching and reminding, delivering warnings and glad tidings to them through His messenger and His Book. However, when their time of respite expires once the truth is conclusively conveyed to them and in accordance with the His established practice they become liable to punishment, He will need any special effort to show them a sign: He will take out an animal from the earth which will bear witness that these wretched people are not prepared to believe in God's revelations and thus are worthy of His wrath. It is evident from this style of the Qur'ān that at the moment God is sending down His revelations and conclusively delivering the truth through His messenger and His Book. However, because of their ill-ways, once the decision to consign them to destruction would be made, God will make an animal come out from the earth to bear this evidence.

A similar sign in the history of prophets of God is that of the she-camel that was presented to the Thamūd, nation of the Ṣāliḥ (sws). When they outright rejected his call and persisted in their demand for a sign of torment, he nominated a she-camel as such a sign. He informed them that if they harm it in any way, they will face God's wrath. When they did harm it, they were visited by God's punishment.

The interpretation of this verse in the light of linguistic principles, coherence and parallels is very clear to this author. Yet our exegetes mention a strange animal while explaining this verse. According to them, it will appear near the Day of Judgement. In my opinion, this does not relate to this verse; but rather to certain narratives which depict the signs of the Judgement Day. These narratives should be evaluated in the light of principles of criticism and accepted or rejected accordingly.

Here this should also be kept in mind that this threat sounded to the Quraysh was conditional to the time of God's decision about them. If they had persisted in their stubbornness, they would certainly have faced the punishment referred to. However, it is known that gradually their majority accepted faith. Thus they never faced any such decisive punishment the way it was faced by the 'Ād, the Thamūd and other nations. In fact, the miscreants among them were wiped out in their battles with the believers.

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ مِنْ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ فَوْجًا مِّمَّنْ يُّكَذِّبُ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَهُمْ يُوْزَعُوْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾[65]

This verse is a reminder of the Day of Judgement. The word يُوْزَعُوْنَ (be categorized) occurs in verse 17 earlier, where it has been explained. This categorization will be on the basis of the nature and extent of sins committed. Each community will then be sent to those portions of Hell it deserves in accordance with this categorization. In Sūrah al-Ḥijr, it is stated:

لَهَا سَبْعَةُ اَبْوَابٍ ؕ لِكُلِّ بَابٍ مِّنْهُمْ جُزْءٌ مَّقْسُوْمٌ. (١٥: ٤٤)

Hell will have seven gates. For every gate, a special share has been allocated from them. (15:44)

The word فَوْج refers to the large number of those who denied. The purpose is to show that in spite of this number, God will not be the slightest bothered to gather them nor will the Hell created by Him have any shortage of space. It will gulp all the armies and even ask for more.

حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءُوْ قَالَ اَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِاٰيٰتِيْ وَلَمْ تُحِيْطُوْا بِهَا عِلْمًا اَمَّا ذَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾[66]

The implication of this verse is that if they had denied this reward and punishment because they have knowledge of the secrets of this Universe, it could have been a valid opinion. However, what is the excuse they have when they do not have such comprehensive knowledge of this Universe.

It thus becomes evident from this that to acknowledge something, it is enough that signs and proofs exist in its favour in human intellect and in human nature as well as in the world at large. It cannot be denied merely because all its details are not known. If someone denies it on this basis, then it means that he claims to have the knowledge of all the secrets of this Universe. None except the Creator has such knowledge. The example of such a foolish person is of one who denies the existence of the Himalayas because he has not seen all its peaks and valleys.

وَوَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمَا ظَلَمُوْا فَهُمْ لَا يَنْطِقُوْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾[67]

In other words, these people will not be able to present any excuse in response to the above mentioned question of God. They will not be able to speak and God's verdict of

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65. And remember the day when from each *ummah* We shall gather a whole army of people who used to deny Our revelations. Thus they will be categorized.

66. Until when they gather together, God will ask: "Did you deny My revelations even though your knowledge could not embrace them or: 'What had you been doing?'"

67. And the word shall be fulfilled for them because they had been unjust to their souls; thus they would not be able to say anything.

punishment will be implemented on them. The expression وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ has been explained earlier. However, here the events of the Day of Judgement are being narrated. Hence the verdict here refers to God's decision of consigning all these wrongdoers to Hell. The expression لَا يَنْطِقُوْنَ should be understood in the light of the following verse of Sūrah Yāsīn:

اَلْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلٰٓى اَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَآ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ اَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ (٣٦:٦٥)

Today We shall seal their mouths and their hands will inform Us about their deeds, and their very feet will testify to what they had been doing. (36:65)

The word تُكَلِّمُنَآ may also be noted in the above cited verse. It has been discussed earlier.

اَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا جَعَلْنَا الَّيْلَ لِيَسْكُنُوْا فِيْهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا ۭ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾[68]

In accordance with linguistic principles, parallel words are suppressed in this verse. In the first part, a word to the effect مظلما is suppressed while in the second, تعملوا. The brevity of this style has been discussed at an appropriate instance.

The verb يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ expresses intention.

This verse censures those who were demanding the sign of punishment: Why are these wretched people insisting on this demand? Why do they not reflect on the signs of this Universe? Do they not see this power and wisdom of God that manifests every day in which the night has been made dark to provide them with comfort and the day has been lighted up so that they can work in it. There are several signs in this . However, only those people can see them who intend to believe.

The arguments that have been presented by the Qur'ān in favour of the power, wisdom and providence of this Universe's creator as well as in favour of monotheism and the hereafter are explained at various instances in this exegesis. The word اٰيٰتٍ rather succinctly refers to all of them. However, the context and occasion specially relates to the hereafter: when people sleep at night and get up in the morning, they observe being raised to life every day. Similarly, after they die, a time will come when they will get up. The Almighty reminds them of this reality every day; however, there is no remedy to the obduracy of those who have no intention to believe. In Sūrah Furqān, it is similarly stated:

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا وَّالنَّوْمَ سُبَاتًا وَّجَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نُشُوْرًا (٢٥:٤٧)

68. Have they not seen that We have made the night dark so that they can rest in it and made the day radiant so that they may do work in it? Indeed, there are signs in this for those who want to believe.

It is He Who has made the night a covering for you and made in it sleep a means of comfort and made the day a time to be raised again. (25:47)

The supplication before going to sleep at night also reminds people of this reality.

وَيَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّوْرِ فَفَزِعَ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا مَنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَكُلٌّ اَتَوْهُ دٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿۸۷﴾ [69]

This verse reminds people of the horror of the Day of Judgement. They should not regard this day to be an easy affair. When the trumpet is sounded everyone will be terrified by its horror. Only they will be secured from the upheaval of that day who the Almighty will intend. In verse 89 ahead, the concise nature of this description is elaborated upon.

People of high and low status as the leaders and their followers – everyone will appear before God in humiliation. Only those people will be secured from this disgrace which have been referred to earlier.

وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَّهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ ؕ صُنْعَ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْٓ اَتْقَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ؕ اِنَّهٗ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾ [70]

This is a further description of the horror of that day. It can be imagined what will happen to other things when firmly implanted mountains would be flying about like clouds. Here it may be kept in mind that sages among poets of classical Arabic regarded everything except the mountains to be mortal.

The expression صُنْعَ اللّٰهِ is similar to وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ and صِبْغَةَ اللّٰهِ. This style is adopted when it is specifically meant to direct attention to a certain object. The implication is that all this is the work and marvel of the God Who has made everything firm. When it was He Who made everything strong and robust, He will also show the fragile nature of the implanted mountains.

The last part of the verse states the real thing to inform people of which all these details of the horrors of the Day of Judgment have been related. The implication is that such will be the extent of the upheaval on the Day of Judgement and God is fully aware of all their misdeeds. So when He is aware of them, He will definitely bring them to justice.

مَنْ جَآءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهٗ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهَا ۚ وَهُمْ مِّنْ فَزَعٍ يَّوْمَئِذٍ اٰمِنُوْنَ ﴿۸۹﴾ وَمَنْ جَآءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَكُبَّتْ وُجُوْهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ ؕ هَلْ تُجْزَوْنَ اِلَّا مَا

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69. And keep in mind the day on which the trumpet is blown; so, whatever is in the heavens and in the earth all will be gripped by fear. Only they will remain secure about whom God wills and all will come before him in submission.

70. And observing the mountains, you think that they are firmly implanted whereas they will be flying about like clouds. This will be the work of the God Who has made everything solidly. Indeed, He knows everything that you do.

كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٠﴾[71]

Stated here is the necessary consequence of the last part of the previous verse. God's verdict will be pronounced with justice for the righteous and the wrongdoers.

اِنَّمَآ اُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَعْبُدَ رَبَّ هٰذِهِ الْبَلْدَةِ الَّذِیْ حَرَّمَهَا وَلَهٗ كُلُّ شَیْءٍ ۫ وَّ اُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِیْنَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَ اَنْ اَتْلُوَا الْقُرْاٰنَ ۚ فَمَنِ اهْتَدٰى فَاِنَّمَا یَهْتَدِیْ لِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَ مَنْ ضَلَّ فَقُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُنْذِرِیْنَ ﴿٩٢﴾[72]

Here, at the end, God has explained through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) his mission and its objective in a very decisive way so that if the Quraysh want to mend their ways, they are provided with this opportunity otherwise they should get ready to face the consequences.

In my opinion, the word قُل is suppressed before اِنَّمَآ اُمِرْتُ because of concomitant indications: this is evident later by the words فَقُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُنْذِرِیْنَ and قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ.

The verse refers to the land of Makkah and history of the House of God. The Prophet (sws) has been selected to revive the purpose for which God chose this land and made it sacred. Hence, he will not be diverted from this purpose however much people try to do so. This land is the centre of the religion of Abraham (sws) and hence the real task that should be carried out here is to call people towards one God – the way he is doing. He has totally acquitted himself from the uncalled for worship that is being done here. Just as he has been asked to worship God alone, he has also been directed to show obedience to Him only. He has no relation with various demands that they are making from him. He has been directed to read out the Qur'ān to them. Its benefit or lack of it will depend on the attitude they adopt. His responsibility is to only warn them.

Here, the supplication made by Abraham (sws) may be kept in mind in which he requested God to send a special messenger from among his progeny (the Ishmaelites) whose task would be to read out the Qur'ān to them and purify them through law and wisdom (62:2). The implication is that the Prophet (sws) is undertaking the same task for which the founder of this centre of monotheism had supplicated. He who wants a share from this good should participate in it or get ready to face the consequences.

وَ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ سَیُرِیْكُمْ اٰیٰتِهٖ فَتَعْرِفُوْنَهَا ؕ وَ مَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾[73]

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71. Those who bring virtue, for them is a better reward than it and on that day they shall remain secure from every worry. And those who bring vice will be cast into Hell headlong: "You are getting the same in return to what you have been doing."

72. I have only been directed to worship the Lord of this city Who has made it sacred and in whose authority is everything. And I have been directed to remain among His obedient and to read out the Qur'ān. Then he adopts the path of guidance, will do it for his own benefit alone and he who chooses to go astray, say: I am only a warner.

73. And say: Gratitude is for God alone. And He will show His signs to you; so you will

The Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them that only worthy of gratitude is God Who revealed the Qur'ān that he is reading out to him. If they do not duly value it and instead demand signs of punishment from him, then very soon He will show them these signs. At that time, they will come to know how true were the things they had been informed of by him, but they did not value them because of their misfortune.

The word فَتَعْرِفُوْنَهَا refers to the fact that at that time will these people realize that they had been warned of someone who they rejected and called for their doom. However, this realization will be of no benefit to them.

The implication of the last part of the verse is that they should not remain under the misconception that God is unaware of their pranks. He knows everything and will call them to account. Every task He carries out has an appointed time.

With these words, the explanation of this *sūrah* reaches its culmination with the grace and help of God فالحمد لله على ذلك (so gratitude be to Him on this).

Raḥmānābād
21 February 1974

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recognize them and your Lord is not unaware of whatever you are doing.

Surah al-Qaṣaṣ

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah al-Naml, the previous *sūrah*. Hence, there is no basic difference between the central themes of the two. In the previous *sūrah*, only that part of the account of Moses (sws) was described that was related to assigning him as a prophet and then being sent to the Pharaoh (sws). In this *sūrah*, the complete details of this account are mentioned, beginning from his birth to being given the Torah. There was only a veiled reference about the Israelites in the previous *sūrah*. In this *sūrah*, the attitude of both their evil and the righteous elements is discussed in detail, which shows that by that time the Jews had openly come to the fore.

The account of Moses (sws) has been narrated to Prophet Muḥammad (sws) for the very reason the tale of Joseph (sws) was narrated to him in Sūrah Yūsuf: in the mirror of these tales, Muḥammad (sws) is able to fully observe how majestically the Almighty protects His messengers and how He makes His schemes materialise. Moreover, his opponents are also able to see the fate they will finally meet if they continue with their attitude.

The Quraysh are explained in this *sūrah* to that just as the Almighty had sent Moses (sws) as a Messenger to the Pharaoh and his people, in a similar way, He has sent this Messenger and this Book to them. The purpose is that they become fully aware of God's guidance and are not left with any excuse to continue to follow their wrong ways.

The Israelites are told that since Muḥammad (sws) was absent at the time, it was not possible that he would have been able to know about certain aspects of the life of Moses (sws) which they themselves are not correctly aware of and that too with such detail. They are further told that they had lost the guidance the Almighty had revealed to them. So, He wanted to revive this guidance for them through His messenger who conclusively communicated the truth to them.

The Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is assured that he has not demanded this Qur'ān from God. On the contrary, it is God Who has entrusted it to him. So, when God has made him responsible for it, he should carry out his obligation while disregarding the opposition of the opponents and the difficulties of his path. The God Who has burdened him with this task will help him at every step and make him succeed.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-43): This section describes the account of Moses (sws) from his birth till the time he was given the Torah.

Verses (44-46): The discourse shifts towards the Prophet (sws). He is told that he was not aware of the various phases and places of the tale of Moses (sws). God made him aware of them so that His *sharī'ah* is revived once again through the Prophet (sws). This is God's favour to him and to his nation too, to which no messenger had come untill then. God wanted to conclusively convey the truth to them through him before he punishes them.

Verses (44-46): It is shown how the Quraysh opposed this call of God and how they demanded miracles from him to prove his prophet hood. They asked him to show these miracles to them the way Moses (sws) did to his people. This demand was implanted in their minds by the Jews. An answer is given to this demand that silences them. True People of the Book, who, in spite of the pandemonium created by their nation, were backing the Prophet (sws) and the call of the Qur'ān are praised.

Verses (56-61): The Prophet (sws) is given assurance and an answer is given to the Quraysh to allay their fear that if they accept this call, their political and economic clout will be totally shattered.

Verses (62-75): The baseless nature of the idols and intercessors of the Quraysh is highlighted whom the latter regarded as the means of all their successes and feared that if they left them, they would be destroyed.

Verses (76-84): The fate of a capitalist Jew is mentioned. The purpose is to show that all favours are granted by God but wretched people think that they are the result of their own ability and of the blessings of their idols.

Verses (85-88): The Prophet (sws) is urged to remain steadfast on his stance and disregard his opponents. The God Who has burdened him with the responsibility of communicating and disseminating the Qur'ān will help him in every difficulty that he encounters.

Text and Translation

Section 1: Verses (1-46)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

طٰسٓمٓ ﴿١﴾ تِلۡكَ اٰيٰتُ الۡكِتٰبِ الۡمُبِيۡنِ ﴿٢﴾ نَتۡلُوۡا عَلَيۡكَ مِنۡ نَّبَاِ مُوۡسٰى وَفِرۡعَوۡنَ بِالۡحَقِّ لِقَوۡمٍ يُّؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿٣﴾
اِنَّ فِرۡعَوۡنَ عَلَا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَجَعَلَ اَهۡلَهَا شِيَعًا يَّسۡتَضۡعِفُ طَآئِفَةً مِّنۡهُمۡ يُذَبِّحُ اَبۡنَآءَهُمۡ وَيَسۡتَحۡىٖ نِسَآءَهُمۡ ؕ
اِنَّهٗ كَانَ مِنَ الۡمُفۡسِدِيۡنَ ﴿٤﴾ وَنُرِيۡدُ اَنۡ نَّمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِيۡنَ اسۡتُضۡعِفُوۡا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَنَجۡعَلَهُمۡ اَئِمَّةً وَّ نَجۡعَلَهُمُ

الْوٰرِثِيْنَ ۝٥ وَنُمَكِّنَ لَهُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَنُرِيَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامٰنَ وَجُنُوْدَهُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَحْذَرُوْنَ ۝٦ وَاَوْحَيْنَآ
اِلٰٓى اُمِّ مُوْسٰٓى اَنْ اَرْضِعِيْهِ ۚ فَاِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَاَلْقِيْهِ فِي الْيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِيْ وَلَا تَحْزَنِيْ ۚ اِنَّا رَآدُّوْهُ اِلَيْكِ وَجَاعِلُوْهُ
مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ۝٧ فَالْتَقَطَهٗٓ اٰلُ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُوْنَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَّحَزَنًا ۭ اِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامٰنَ وَجُنُوْدَهُمَا كَانُوْا
خٰطِـِٕيْنَ ۝٨ وَقَالَتِ امْرَاَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرَّتُ عَيْنٍ لِّيْ وَلَكَ ۭ لَا تَقْتُلُوْهُ ۖ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّنْفَعَنَآ اَوْ نَتَّخِذَهٗ وَلَدًا وَّهُمْ لَا
يَشْعُرُوْنَ ۝٩ وَاَصْبَحَ فُؤَادُ اُمِّ مُوْسٰى فٰرِغًا ۭ اِنْ كَادَتْ لَتُبْدِيْ بِهٖ لَوْلَآ اَنْ رَّبَطْنَا عَلٰي قَلْبِهَا لِتَكُوْنَ مِنَ
الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝١٠ وَقَالَتْ لِاُخْتِهٖ قُصِّيْهِ ۭ فَبَصُرَتْ بِهٖ عَنْ جُنُبٍ وَّهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ۝١١ وَحَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاضِعَ
مِنْ قَبْلُ فَقَالَتْ هَلْ اَدُلُّكُمْ عَلٰٓى اَهْلِ بَيْتٍ يَّكْفُلُوْنَهٗ لَكُمْ وَهُمْ لَهٗ نٰصِحُوْنَ ۝١٢ فَرَدَدْنٰهُ اِلٰٓى اُمِّهٖ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا
وَلَا تَحْزَنَ وَلِتَعْلَمَ اَنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝١٣ وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗ وَاسْتَوٰٓى اٰتَيْنٰهُ حُكْمًا وَّ
عِلْمًا ۭ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ۝١٤ وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِيْنَةَ عَلٰي حِيْنِ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ اَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيْهَا رَجُلَيْنِ
يَقْتَتِلٰنِ ۚ هٰذَا مِنْ شِيْعَتِهٖ وَهٰذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهٖ ۚ فَاسْتَغَاثَهُ الَّذِيْ مِنْ شِيْعَتِهٖ عَلَي الَّذِيْ مِنْ عَدُوِّهٖ ۙ فَوَكَزَهٗ
مُوْسٰى فَقَضٰى عَلَيْهِ ۡ قَالَ هٰذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ۝١٥ قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِيْ
فَاغْفِرْ لِيْ فَغَفَرَ لَهٗ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ۝١٦ قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَآ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ فَلَنْ اَكُوْنَ ظَهِيْرًا لِّلْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ۝١٧
فَاَصْبَحَ فِي الْمَدِيْنَةِ خَاۗىِٕفًا يَّتَرَقَّبُ فَاِذَا الَّذِي اسْتَنْصَرَهٗ بِالْاَمْسِ يَسْتَصْرِخُهٗ ۭ قَالَ لَهٗ مُوْسٰٓى اِنَّكَ لَغَوِيٌّ
مُّبِيْنٌ ۝١٨ فَلَمَّآ اَنْ اَرَادَ اَنْ يَّبْطِشَ بِالَّذِيْ هُوَ عَدُوٌّ لَّهُمَا ۙ قَالَ يٰمُوْسٰٓى اَتُرِيْدُ اَنْ تَقْتُلَنِيْ كَمَا قَتَلْتَ نَفْسًۢا
بِالْاَمْسِ ۡ اِنْ تُرِيْدُ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ جَبَّارًا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَمَا تُرِيْدُ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِيْنَ ۝١٩ وَجَاۗءَ رَجُلٌ مِّنْ
اَقْصَا الْمَدِيْنَةِ يَسْعٰى ۡ قَالَ يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنَّ الْمَلَاَ يَاْتَمِرُوْنَ بِكَ لِيَقْتُلُوْكَ فَاخْرُجْ اِنِّيْ لَكَ مِنَ النّٰصِحِيْنَ ۝٢٠ فَخَرَجَ
مِنْهَا خَاۗىِٕفًا يَّتَرَقَّبُ ۡ قَالَ رَبِّ نَجِّنِيْ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۝٢١ وَلَمَّا تَوَجَّهَ تِلْقَاۗءَ مَدْيَنَ قَالَ عَسٰى رَبِّيْٓ اَنْ
يَّهْدِيَنِيْ سَوَاۗءَ السَّبِيْلِ ۝٢٢ وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَاۗءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ اُمَّةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ يَسْقُوْنَ ۡ وَوَجَدَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِمُ
امْرَاَتَيْنِ تَذُوْدٰنِ ۚ قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمَا ۭ قَالَتَا لَا نَسْقِيْ حَتّٰى يُصْدِرَ الرِّعَاۗءُ ۭ وَاَبُوْنَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيْرٌ ۝٢٣ فَسَقٰى لَهُمَا ثُمَّ
تَوَلّٰٓى اِلَى الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ لِمَآ اَنْزَلْتَ اِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيْرٌ ۝٢٤ فَجَاۗءَتْهُ اِحْدٰىهُمَا تَمْشِيْ عَلَي اسْتِحْيَاۗءٍ ۡ قَالَتْ
اِنَّ اَبِيْ يَدْعُوْكَ لِيَجْزِيَكَ اَجْرَ مَا سَقَيْتَ لَنَا ۭ فَلَمَّا جَاۗءَهٗ وَقَصَّ عَلَيْهِ الْقَصَصَ ۙ قَالَ لَا تَخَفْ ۫ نَجَوْتَ مِنَ

الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قَالَتْ اِحْدٰىهُمَا يٰۤاَبَتِ اسْتَاْجِرْهُ ۫ اِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَاْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْاَمِيْنُ ﴿٢٦﴾ قَالَ اِنِّيْۤ
اُرِيْدُ اَنْ اُنْكِحَكَ اِحْدَى ابْنَتَيَّ هٰتَيْنِ عَلٰۤى اَنْ تَاْجُرَنِيْ ثَمٰنِيَ حِجَجٍ ۚ فَاِنْ اَتْمَمْتَ عَشْرًا فَمِنْ عِنْدِكَ ۚ وَمَاۤ اُرِيْدُ
اَنْ اَشُقَّ عَلَيْكَ ؕ سَتَجِدُنِيْۤ اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ قَالَ ذٰلِكَ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكَ ؕ اَيَّمَا الْاَجَلَيْنِ قَضَيْتُ
فَلَا عُدْوَانَ عَلَيَّ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى مَا نَقُوْلُ وَكِيْلٌ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَلَمَّا قَضٰى مُوْسَى الْاَجَلَ وَسَارَ بِاَهْلِهٖۤ اٰنَسَ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّوْرِ
نَارًا ۚ قَالَ لِاَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوْۤا اِنِّيْۤ اٰنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّيْۤ اٰتِيْكُمْ مِّنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ اَوْ جَذْوَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَلَمَّاۤ
اَتٰىهَا نُوْدِيَ مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْوَادِ الْاَيْمَنِ فِي الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبٰرَكَةِ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ اَنْ يّٰمُوْسٰۤى اِنِّيْۤ اَنَا اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَ
اَنْ اَلْقِ عَصَاكَ ؕ فَلَمَّا رَاٰهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَاَنَّهَا جَآنٌّ وَّلّٰى مُدْبِرًا وَّلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ ؕ يٰمُوْسٰۤى اَقْبِلْ وَلَا تَخَفْ ۫ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الْاٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾
اُسْلُكْ يَدَكَ فِيْ جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَآءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوْٓءٍ ۫ وَّاضْمُمْ اِلَيْكَ جَنَاحَكَ مِنَ الرَّهْبِ فَذٰنِكَ بُرْهَانٰنِ مِنْ
رَّبِّكَ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَا۟ئِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا فٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ قَتَلْتُ مِنْهُمْ نَفْسًا فَاَخَافُ اَنْ يَّقْتُلُوْنِ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَ
اَخِيْ هٰرُوْنُ هُوَ اَفْصَحُ مِنِّيْ لِسَانًا فَاَرْسِلْهُ مَعِيَ رِدْاً يُّصَدِّقُنِيْۤ ۫ اِنِّيْۤ اَخَافُ اَنْ يُّكَذِّبُوْنِ ﴿٣٤﴾ قَالَ سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَكَ
بِاَخِيْكَ وَنَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا سُلْطٰنًا فَلَا يَصِلُوْنَ اِلَيْكُمَا ۚ بِاٰيٰتِنَاۤ ۚ اَنْتُمَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكُمَا الْغٰلِبُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ
مُّوْسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ قَالُوْا مَا هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّفْتَرًى وَّمَا سَمِعْنَا بِهٰذَا فِيْۤ اٰبَآئِنَا الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَقَالَ مُوْسٰى رَبِّيْۤ
اَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ جَآءَ بِالْهُدٰى مِنْ عِنْدِهٖ وَمَنْ تَكُوْنُ لَهٗ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ
يٰۤاَيُّهَا الْمَلَاُ مَا عَلِمْتُ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرِيْ ۚ فَاَوْقِدْ لِيْ يٰهَامٰنُ عَلَى الطِّيْنِ فَاجْعَلْ لِّيْ صَرْحًا لَّعَلِّيْۤ اَطَّلِعُ اِلٰۤى اِلٰهِ
مُوْسٰى ۙ وَاِنِّيْ لَاَظُنُّهٗ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ هُوَ وَجُنُوْدُهٗ فِي الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَظَنُّوْۤا اَنَّهُمْ اِلَيْنَا لَا
يُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ فَاَخَذْنٰهُ وَجُنُوْدَهٗ فَنَبَذْنٰهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ ۚ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ اَئِمَّةً
يَّدْعُوْنَ اِلَى النَّارِ ۚ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَا يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَاَتْبَعْنٰهُمْ فِيْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً ۚ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ هُمْ مِّنَ
الْمَقْبُوْحِيْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَاۤ اَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُوْنَ الْاُوْلٰى بَصَآئِرَ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً
لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الْغَرْبِيِّ اِذْ قَضَيْنَاۤ اِلٰى مُوْسَى الْاَمْرَ وَمَا كُنْتَ مِنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَ
لٰكِنَّاۤ اَنْشَاْنَا قُرُوْنًا فَتَطَاوَلَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ ۚ وَمَا كُنْتَ ثَاوِيًا فِيْۤ اَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ تَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِنَا ۙ وَلٰكِنَّا كُنَّا
مُرْسِلِيْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الطُّوْرِ اِذْ نَادَيْنَا وَلٰكِنْ رَّحْمَةً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّاۤ اَتٰىهُمْ مِّنْ نَّذِيْرٍ مِّنْ

قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

This is Ṭā Sīn Mīm. These are the verses of the clear Book of God. We will narrate to you some part of the tale of Moses and the Pharaoh in all truth for the guidance of those who want to accept faith. (1-3)

Indeed, the Pharaoh had become a tyrant in the land of Egypt. And he had divided its inhabitants into different classes. He had oppressed one of their groups: he would slaughter their sons and let their women live. Indeed, he was among those who create disorder in the land. And We wanted to show favour to those who had been oppressed in the land and to make them leaders and grant them inheritance and to bestow political authority upon them in the land and, through them, inflict the Pharaoh and Hāmān and their armies with what they feared. (4-6)

And We revealed to the mother of Moses: "Suckle him; so, when you have fear for him, consign him to the river and fear and grieve not. We will bring him back to you and will make him from among Our messengers." (7)

So, the Pharaoh's household picked him up so that he may become their enemy and a source of grief. Indeed, the Pharaoh and Hāmān and their armies committed a grave mistake. And the Pharaoh's wife said to him: "This is the comfort of your and my eyes. Do not kill him. It may well be that he gives us benefit or we even make him our son but little did they know of the fate. (8-9)

And the heart of Moses' mother became very anxious. She may well have revealed its secret if We had not taken hold of her heart so that she remain from among the believers. And she said to his sister: "Go after him." So, she kept any eye on him from afar and these people were not able to know of this. (10-11)

And We had already made him refuse the milk of wet nurses; so, she said: "Should I inform you of a household who will bring him up for your sake and will look after him with great care?" Thus We had him returned to his mother so that her eyes become soothed and she does not grieve and that she fully knows that God's promise is always fulfilled but most people are not aware of this. (12-13)

Thus when he reached his youth and became complete, We granted him the power of judgement and blessed him with knowledge and thus do We reward those who are thorough. (14)

And one day when he entered the city unheeded, he saw two people fighting. One of them belonged to his own faction and the other belonged to the faction of his enemies. So, the one who belonged to his faction requested him to help against the person who was from his opponents. Then Moses threw a punch at him and killed him. He said: "This is a satanic act done by me; indeed, he is an open enemy who leads astray." He prayed: "My Lord! I have been unjust to my soul; pardon me." So, God pardoned him. Indeed, He is most Forgiving and Merciful. He said: "Since you have shown your grace to me, I promise that I will never be among those who help wrongdoers." (15-17)

Thus, the next day he entered the city, scared and probing around. He then saw the

same person who had sought help yesterday again asking him for help today. Moses said: "You are a very evident mischievous person." Thus, when he made up his mind to grasp the person who was the enemy of both, he cried out: "Moses! Do you want to kill me the way you killed a person yesterday. You want to become a tyrant in this land. You do not want to be among those who set right affairs." (18-19)

And a person came running from the far end of the city. He said: "Moses! The high-ups of the government are consulting to kill you; so, go away from here; I am from among your well-wishers." So, he went away from there scared and probing around and he prayed: "Lord! Deliver me from the nation of the oppressors." (20-21)

And when he turned towards Madyan, he prayed: "Hopefully my Lord will guide me to the straight path." And when he reached the well of Madyan, he saw a swarm of people who were providing water to their flocks and two women aside from them who were waiting with their goats. He asked them: "What is your issue?" They replied: "We do not let our goats drink untill the shepherds take away their goats and our father is very old." So, he made helped their goats drink for them; then withdrew to a shade and prayed: "Lord! I am in need of whatever good you send down to me at this time." (22-24)

Thus one of them shyly came over. She said: "My father is calling you that he may reward you for providing water to our flock for us." So, when he came and recounted before him all the story, he said: "Now fear not. You have been delivered from the oppressors." (25)

One of them said: "Father! Keep this man in your service because a person who is strong and trustworthy is the best of those who can serve." (26)

The old man said: "I want to wed one of my girls to you on the condition that you will serve me for eight years. If you take this term to ten years, then this will be your will. I do not impose any hardship on you. God willing, you will find me a decent person." He replied: "This agreement is final between you and me. There shall be no compulsion on me regarding whichever of the two periods I complete. And God is a witness to the agreement we are making." (27-28)

So, when Moses (sws) completed the term and departed with his family, he saw a flame towards the mount of Sinai. He said to his family: "Stay here that I may go and bring some news from there or bring an live ember so that you may warm yourselves." (29)

So, when he came near it in the blessed place from the side of the valley of Ayman, he heard a voice from the tree: "Moses! I am God, Lord of the worlds. You throw down your staff." Then when he saw it slithering as if it was a serpent, he turned and fled and did not look back. Moses! Come forward and fear not; you are absolutely secure. Put your hand in your armpit. It will come out white without any ailment and draw back your arm the way it is drawn back in fear. Thus, these are two signs from your Lord to go to the Pharaoh and his courtiers. Indeed, they are a very insolent people. (30-32)

He said: "Lord! I have killed one of them; so I fear that they will kill me. And my brother Aaron is more eloquent than me. Send him with me also as my helper, that he may support me. I fear that these people will reject me." God said: "We will also strengthen your arm with your brother and bestow a special power on you both so that they are not able to harm you. So go with Our signs, both of you, and those who follow you will remain dominant." (33-35)

Then, when Moses came to them with Our very clear signs, they said: "This is merely a magic fabricated and we have never heard of such things from our predecessors." (36)

And Moses said: "My Lord knows full well the one who has come from Him with guidance and whose fate in the Hereafter is good. The unjust will never attain success." (37)

And the Pharaoh said: "Courtiers! I am not aware of any god for you except myself. So, O Haman! Ignite bricks of clay for me and build for me a tall palace that I may peep on the God of Moses. I regard him to be liar." (38)

And he and his armies showed arrogance without any reason and they thought that they will never have to return to Us. So, We seized him and his armies. Thus We flung them into the sea. Then see the fate the unjust met! And in this world We made them leaders who call towards Hell and on the Day of Judgement, they will not be helped and in this world We put a curse on them and on the Day of Judgement, they will be the ones ruined. (39-42)

And after destroying the earlier nations, We gave the Book to Moses as one that gives insights to people and as a guide and mercy that they may be reminded. (43)

And you were neither present on the western side of the mountain when We informed Moses of Our decision and nor were you among those people who were present there. But We raised up many nations; then a period of time passed over them [and they forgot Our reminder; so, We sent you as a messenger to remind them] and you were also not stationed among the people of Madyan when We were reciting Our revelations, but We were to send you as a messenger [so We informed you of those events], and you were also not present aside Ṭūr when We called Moses, but you [were sent] by the grace of your Lord [that] you may warn a nation to which no warner came before you so that they be reminded. (44-46)

Explanation

طٰسٓمٓ ﴿١﴾ تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِيْنِ ﴿٢﴾[1]

The isolated letters have been discussed earlier in this exegesis. The fact that the expression الْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِيْنِ has in it the elements of both favour and conclusive communication of the truth – especially for the People of the Book – has also been

1. This is Ṭā Sīn Mīm. These are the verses of the clear Book of God.

explained at an appropriate place. The previous *sūrah* also has a very similar introductory verse. This is very clear evidence that both have the same central theme.

نَتْلُوْا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ نَّبَاِ مُوْسٰى وَفِرْعَوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ لِقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾[2]

Though the Prophet (sws) is addressed in this verse, yet the last words are proof of the fact that the purpose of narrating this account is to sound a warning to the leaders of the Quraysh – who were the Pharaohs of their times. The word بِالْحَقِّ means "in truth, the way it exactly is with an objective and a purpose to teach a lesson." In the Torah, neither is the account of Moses and the Pharaoh (sws) correctly narrated, nor does it bring out the message and lesson which is its real spirit. The Qur'ān has recounted this tale while keeping in view both these aspects. The verb in لِقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ expresses intention. These last words of the verse harbour a warning in them: only those people will benefit from this account, narrated by God, who have the intention to profess faith; those who have become blind and deaf will remain so and they will not change.

اِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ اَهْلَهَا شِيَعًا يَّسْتَضْعِفُ طَآئِفَةً مِّنْهُمْ يُذَبِّحُ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ وَيَسْتَحْىٖ نِسَآءَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٤﴾[3]

Before the actual account is narrated, this and the two succeeding verses are meant to state the objective and purpose for which this account is related. This style has been adopted in the Qur'ān at a number of places: before narrating an account the message it is intended to convey is very concisely stated before the reader so that he does not get lost in the immensity of the story. An example has occurred in Sūrah al-Kahf.

Consider the first part of the verse: اِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِى الْاَرْضِ. To be tyrannical in the land means that a person ignores the intent and directives of the real Creator of this universe and follows his own desires, and, instead of asking people to worship and show obedience to God, asks them to worship and serve him.

The words وَجَعَلَ اَهْلَهَا شِيَعًا يَّسْتَضْعِفُ طَآئِفَةً مِّنْهُمْ explain the nature of the Pharaoh's tyranny and spreading anarchy in the land: he had divided the inhabitants of his country into categories and he had oppressed one of their factions by making them his slaves. When the ruler and the ruled both are slaves of God, then it is not permissible for a ruler to discriminate between his subjects. In fact, the law should be the same for both the ruler and ruled. Similarly, the norms of justice and equality should be the same for

2. We will narrate to you some part of the tale of Moses and the Pharaoh in all truth for the guidance of those who want to accept faith.

3. Indeed, the Pharaoh had become a tyrant in the land of Egypt. And he had divided its inhabitants into different classes. He had oppressed one of their groups: he would slaughter their sons and let their women live. Indeed, he was those who create disorder in the land.

both. Yet the Pharaoh had made the Israelites his slaves and had become their god. At the same time, he had authorized the Copts, his own nation, to force the Israelites to work for them as slaves.

The words يُذَبِّحُ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيٖ نِسَآءَهُمْ express an example of the oppression and injustice which the Pharaoh and the Copts had subjected the Israelites to. The fear which induced the Pharaoh and his chiefs to take up the inhuman scheme of killing the male children of the Israelites has already been explained in Sūrah Ṭāhā and some other previous *sūrahs*.

The words اِنَّهٗ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ refer to the fact that the Pharaoh was among those who spread anarchy and disorder in God's earth whereas the Almighty has blessed all those with power and authority for the sole reason of establishing justice and peace in it.

وَنُرِيْدُ اَنْ نَّمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ اسْتُضْعِفُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ اَىِٕمَّةً وَّ نَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوٰرِثِيْنَ ۙ﴿۵﴾[4]

There occurs a suppression of an incomplete verb before نُرِيْدُ in accordance with the linguistic principles of Arabic. The implication is that the Pharaoh and his companions were bent upon oppressing the Israelites and wanted to ensure that the Israelites should not escape from this oppression. On the other hand, it was God's intent that He show favour to the oppressed, grant them religious leadership and after destroying the oppressors, give the oppressed the chance to rule. The words نَجْعَلَهُمْ اَىِٕمَّةً refer to the religious authority which the Israelites were bestowed after the advent of Moses (sws), while the words نَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوٰرِثِيْنَ refer to the position of political authority that was given to them in the land of Palestine and whose boundaries became very vast in the times of Solomon (sws). So much so that Egypt became its annexure.

وَنُمَكِّنَ لَهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَنُرِىَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامٰنَ وَجُنُوْدَهُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَحْذَرُوْنَ ﴿۶﴾[5]

The expression تَمْكِيْن فِي الاَرْض means political authority and power. In other words, God intended that He grant these oppressed people a strong kingdom and show the Pharaoh and Hāmān that which they feared. The words مَّا كَانُوْا يَحْذَرُوْنَ refer to this fear of the Pharaoh and his chiefs. It has been explained at an appropriate place that they feared the ever increasing number of the Israelites. They contended that if these people were able to acquire force, they would seize the country or connive with exterior enemies to expel the Copts from the land. It is to circumvent this danger that these foolish people plotted the scheme that has been mentioned with all its details in the previous *sūrahs*. Yet before God's plans, all these schemes and preemptive measures could not succeed the slightest. His plans regarding the oppressed were

4. And We wanted to show favour to those who had been oppressed in the land and to make them leaders and grant them inheritance and to bestow political authority on them in the land

5. And through them inflict the Pharaoh and Hāmān and their armies with what they feared.

materialised and their enemies in spite of their power and might and in spite of all their planning were routed. It should be kept in mind that it is to present this fact which is mentioned subsequently in this *sūrah,* that the whole tale is being narrated to the Quraysh. The purpose is that they should not consider it an ancient tale but hear it while keeping in view the truth found in it.

Here, it is for the first time that Hāmān is also mentioned with the Pharaoh. The way he is mentioned, shows that he was a minister of the Pharaoh and that he had a special interest in oppressing the Israelites. Further ahead also, he is mentioned as the prime minister of the Pharaoh. The Torah does not mention this name, but this does not make any difference. There are so many facts which the Qur'ān has actually corrected in the Torah or made additions. This also is a valuable addition in the account of Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh. Some orientalists have objected to this name. They say that there was no one in Egypt by this name. I am afraid that this objection of these naïve people is totally foolish. Can they claim that they have found a comprehensive list of names of all the ministers and high officials of Egypt of that era? Are these people even united about the person of the Pharaoh who was a contemporary of Moses (sws), let alone that list of names? Such things that they say in frenzy of opposing the Qur'ān are not even worth giving attention to. These people are very adept in losing sight of a reality, but when they give information of something, it is very evident that they exaggerate greatly.

Here, there is a specific reason that, besides the Pharaoh and Hāmān, their armies are specially mentioned many times. A study of the history of that era shows that the Pharaoh and his chiefs viewed the issue of the Israelites in a political vein. They regarded their large number to be a threat to the government. For this reason, the Pharaoh had directed all his chiefs that they should ask their armies to remain fully alert to deal with any imminent danger from the Israelites. Thus, when he decided to chase the Israelites, he called all his chiefs together with their armies. The Pharaoh was very proud of his army, as is evident from the Qur'ān and the Torah. However, the Almighty destroyed his pride in the blink of an eye.

وَاَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلٰٓى اُمِّ مُوۡسٰٓى اَنۡ اَرۡضِعِيۡهِ ۚ فَاِذَا خِفۡتِ عَلَيۡهِ فَاَلۡقِيۡهِ فِى الۡيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِىۡ وَلَا تَحۡزَنِىۡ ۚ اِنَّا رَآدُّوۡهُ اِلَيۡكِ وَجَاعِلُوۡهُ مِنَ الۡمُرۡسَلِيۡنَ ۝۷[6]

From here begins the real account. When Moses (sws) was born, the Almighty sent a revelation to his mother to continue to suckle him, and if she had any fear, she should put him in a river, but fear and grieve not the slightest: God will return him to her and make him one of his messengers.

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6. And We revealed to the mother of Moses: "Suckle him; so, when you have fear about him, consign him to the river and fear and grieve not. We will bring him back to you and will make him from among Our messengers."

Revelation here obviously does not refer to the formal revelation which is specific to the messengers of God. It means to implant a thought through an inspiration or a dream in such a manner that the heart is reassured.

In the period when Moses (sws) was born, the scheme of killing the male child was fully in force. Initially, the Pharaoh and his chiefs wanted to use midwives for this purpose but it is evident from the Torah that they did not cooperate much. Finally, the Pharaoh gave the Copts a general directive to throw every male child born to the Israelites into a river. It was in this dangerous period that Moses (sws) was born. Hence, his mother was constantly worried about the safety of her child from the wolves around her. While referring to this danger, the Almighty asked her to suckle him and if she felt any such danger, she should consign the child to the river without any fear or hesitation and not worry or grieve. The Almighty will have him returned to her and in future make him one of His messengers. It is obvious that this directive of the Almighty to consign Moses (sws) to the river was because the Almighty wanted that the very way which the Pharaoh had adopted for killing boys should become a means of deliverance for Moses (sws). It is evident from verse 49 of Sūrah Ṭāhā that God directed her to place Moses (sws) in a box and then consign the box to the river. In the Torah, this incident is related thus:

> And she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. (Exodus, 2:2-3)

The mistakes in the above narration of this incident in the Torah have been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-A'rāf and Sūrah Ṭāhā. Here, what is worthy of special attention is that the mother of Moses (sws) was assured through divine inspiration that the Almighty will return the boy to her and make Him His messenger, and this style of assurance shows that it was given in the form of a promise. It was by trusting this assurance that his mother mustered the courage to undertake this measure, otherwise, how can a mother consign her beloved child to the waves of a river?

فَالْتَقَطَهٗٓ اٰلُ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُوْنَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَّحَزَنًا ۭ اِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامٰنَ وَجُنُوْدَهُمَا كَانُوْا خٰطِـِٕيْنَ ۝[7]

In accordance with strong contextual indication, this much is suppressed before this verse that when his mother felt danger lurking nearby, she placed him in a box made of papyrus and placed the box in the Nile. If the account of the Torah is relied upon, the picture of the incident that emerges is that, for three months, she hid Moses (sws) by adopting various measures, but ultimately realised that she would not be able to

7. So the Pharaoh's household picked him up that he may become their enemy and a source of grief. Indeed, the Pharaoh and Hāmān and their armies committed a grave mistake.

succeed. Thus, she was compelled to do what is mentioned in the above cited verses of the Torah. The river Nile, passing through various settlements of the Israelites, flowed towards the palace of the Pharaoh. There the waves spilled the box on the bank. It caught sight of the family members of the Pharaoh. When they saw an angelic child in it, it was ordered by the king and queen that it be brought to the royal palace. The Pharaoh's wife, who was very kind, as is evident from Sūrah al-Taḥrīm, opined that the boy should not be killed for he may be of benefit to them or they may adopt him as their son. In this way, Moses (sws) reached the royal palace and became the beloved of the king and the queen. Here, it is evident from the word آل that when the news of a boy placed in a box reached the royal palace, all young and old members of the royal family reached the place and all of them carried him back to the palace.

The ل in لِيَكُوْنَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَّ حَزَنًا is for expressing the consequence and fate. They had picked up the child so that it could become a means of comfort for them, as will become evident from words of the queen ahead. However, they did not know what was concealed by fate for them in this measure: it would be through the hands of this child that the supremacy and power of the Pharaoh will be routed forever.

The words اِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامٰنَ وَجُنُوْدَهُمَا كَانُوْا خٰطِـِٕيْنَ are a general comment on the attitude of the Pharaoh, Hāmān and their armies. Because of their foolishness they thought that all power and authority was in their hands and they would continue to oppress the Israelites in this way. Little did they know that God wanted that their greatest enemy be raised in their royal palace through the king and the queen. Readers may look up verse 6 above.

وَقَالَتِ امْرَاَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرَّتُ عَيْنٍ لِّيْ وَلَكَ ؕ لَا تَقْتُلُوْهُ ۖ عَسٰۤى اَنْ يَّنْفَعَنَاۤ اَوْ نَتَّخِذَهٗ وَلَدًا وَّ هُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿۹﴾[8]

When the queen saw the child, she was bewitched by his angelic face. She told the Pharaoh that this child is the comfort of their eyes and that he should not slay him and that he will hopefully be of benefit to them or they may even adopt him as their son. At another place, I have explained about the queen that she was a very kind-hearted lady who was sick of the Pharaoh's attitude.

The words عَسٰۤى اَنْ يَّنْفَعَنَاۤ اَوْ نَتَّخِذَهٗ وَلَدًا are exactly the same as what the king of Egypt had said about Joseph while addressing his wife. It seems that till that time, the queen was childless and if the statement of the Torah is accepted that the first person to see Moses (sws) was the Pharaoh's daughter, then it will have to be conceded that till that time they did not have a male child. For this reason, they surmised that in the first place such a beautiful child would bring blessings and in the second if they did not have a male child in future, they would adopt him as their son.

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8. And the Pharaoh's wife said to him: "This is the comfort of your and my eyes. Do not kill him. It may well be that he gives us benefit or we even make him our son but little did they know of the fate.

The words وَّ هُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ express the fact that this is what the king and the queen were thinking. However, they did not know what lay in store for them.

وَاَصْبَحَ فُؤَادُ اُمِّ مُوْسٰى فٰرِغًا ؕ اِنْ كَادَتْ لَتُبْدِيْ بِهٖ لَوْلَاۤ اَنْ رَّبَطْنَا عَلٰى قَلْبِهَا لِتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۰﴾[9]

Moses' mother mustered the courage to consign him to the river when she saw that there was no other way out. However, this verse mentions what happened afterwards: her heart became totally bereft of patience. It became likely that she may say or insinuate something that would reveal this secret; however, the Almighty got hold of her, so that she remain steadfast on the faith she was blessed with, even in times of trial. A human being is after all a human being. It is not easy at all to consign one's beloved son to the waves. Though she had been divinely guided in this regard and, in the absence of this, she could not even have imagined it – yet if those who merely imagine this incident get the jitters – who except God could know what was going on in her heart. The Almighty blessed her with special help at this precarious juncture and who except Him could have done so. If God tries and tests His people, then these trials are His established practice and such trials can be tough with respect to the status a person has; however, at the same time, it is His established practice that He takes care of those who fight out these trials. Since Moses' mother had borne witness to her faith and trust in God by consigning her child to the river, the Almighty assured her specially and strengthened her heart in the next phase to honour her trust in Him and ensured that nothing to the contrary happens. This is what God does with believing men and women but few understand this.

وَقَالَتْ لِاُخْتِهٖ قُصِّيْهِ ۫ فَبَصُرَتْ بِهٖ عَنْ جُنُبٍ وَّ هُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۱﴾[10]

When the box floated forward in the river, she asked her daughter to follow it and see where it went. This was the last measure she could have done to reassure herself. Obviously, the box could have been followed till a certain distance; it was bound to sail away from the eyes; however, how could she think of being deprived of seeing it as long as this was possible. Thus, his sister observed the box from a distance so that no one became aware of what was going on. By God's grace, this scheme was successful. She was able to see the box reaching the bank near the Pharaoh's palace and also how the infant brother was taken out from the box and carried inside. It is evident from this that the royal palace was not very far from the settlements of the Israelites.

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9. And the heart of Moses' mother became very anxious. She may well have revealed its secret if We had not taken hold of her heart so that she remain from among the believers.

10. And she said to his sister: "Go after him." So, she kept any eye on him from afar and these people were not able to know of this.

وَحَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاضِعَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَقَالَتْ هَلْ اَدُلُّكُمْ عَلٰٓى اَهْلِ بَيْتٍ يَّكْفُلُوْنَهٗ لَكُمْ وَهُمْ لَهٗ نٰصِحُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾[11]

Now the scheme which the Almighty adopted to have Moses (sws) returned to his mother is mentioned. It is referred to above that the child was transported with great affection to the palace. Obviously; the first issue that needed to be solved was that who should suckle the child. One after the other, various wet-nurses were called, but Moses (sws) refused to drink their milk. Moses' sister took advantage of this situation. She stepped forward and sought permission to lead them to a household who would very tenderly care for the child. The people at the royal palace immediately agreed as they were very worried. In this way, it became possible for Moses (sws) to return to his mother.

فَرَدَدْنٰهُ اِلٰٓى اُمِّهٖ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ وَلِتَعْلَمَ اَنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾[12]

Through this scheme, the Almighty had Moses (sws) extracted from the river and then transported back to his mother's lap so that she was comforted and was relieved of her sorrow.

The words وَلِتَعْلَمَ اَنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ point to the fulfillment of the promise mentioned earlier in verse 7. It was stated there that she should consign the child to the river without any sort of fear; God will protect him and then make him meet her. This verse states that, in this manner, the Almighty showed that He keeps His promise however difficult it may seem apparently and that His scheme never fails. The sentence وَّلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ highlights the real point of note: most people because of their naivety do not understand this fact. They regard God's promises to be bluff and they see loss and danger in trusting them. They want to observe the fulfillment of God's promises and then believe in them. The fact is that this is the real trial of people in this world that they should live and die for the promises and threats of God that are as yet to be fulfilled.

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗ وَاسْتَوٰٓى اٰتَيْنٰهُ حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾[13]

The expression بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗ means reaching adolescence and with it the word اسْتَوٰى adds the meaning of "balance and stability in intellect and temperament" to it. In other

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11. And We had already made him refuse the milk of wet nurses; so, she said: "Should I inform you of a household who will bring him up for your sake and will look after him with great concern?"

12. Thus We had him returned to his mother so that her eyes are soothed and she does not grieve and that she fully knows that God's promise is always fulfilled but most people are not aware of this.

13. Thus when he reached his youth and became complete, We granted him the power of judgement and blessed him with knowledge and thus do We reward those who are thorough.

words, the implication is that Moses (sws) reached a youthful age such that he had a stable and balanced personality. It may be noted that the age of youthfulness in itself is not of that significance, if it does not have the beauty of poise in sense and temperament.

The word حُکم means the power to take decisions and عِلْم means the comprehension of God. Both have various stages and levels. Their highest level is the one bestowed on the prophets of God. Thus, exactly the same words have been mentioned in the Qur'ān for the knowledge of the prophets; however, obviously, here they do not refer to that knowledge and wisdom because the incidents of the early life of Moses (sws) are being related. He was assigned prophet hood much later, as is subsequently mentioned.

The verse states that when Moses (sws) reached the age of youth and his intellect and temperament stabilized, God granted him knowledge and wisdom. The last part of the verse وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ states that this is how God rewards those who are thorough in their deeds. The word مُحْسِنِيْنَ refers to people who use their abilities in the right way at the optimum level. It is stated that to such people God grants a share of knowledge and wisdom. It is this knowledge and wisdom which depicts the perfection and splendour of a person's skills and abilities. If a person is not able to acquire these, he will end up ruining all his abilities as well as his youth.

وَ دَخَلَ الْمَدِيْنَةَ عَلٰى حِيْنِ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ اَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيْهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَتِلٰنِ ۚ هٰذَا مِنْ شِيْعَتِهٖ وَ هٰذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهٖ ۚ فَاسْتَغَاثَهُ الَّذِىْ مِنْ شِيْعَتِهٖ عَلَى الَّذِىْ مِنْ عَدُوِّهٖ ۙ فَوَكَزَهٗ مُوْسٰى فَقَضٰى عَلَيْهِ ۚ قَالَ هٰذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿۱۵﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّىْ ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِىْ فَاغْفِرْ لِىْ فَغَفَرَ لَهٗ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿۱۶﴾[14]

The word مَدِيْنَةَ refers to the actual city which was the centre and capital of the nobility. Since the status of the Israelites was that of slaves and servicemen, their settlement was located separately from the real city. They would go to the city only to provide service and labour.

When Moses (sws) entered his youth, the traits of honour, bravery and civility which are a reflection of piety and knowledge appeared in him in young age. He would go to the city periodically to see the plight of his oppressed brethren. It seems that because of his sense of honour, he was regarded with fear by the Copts. Hence, he would visit the city in secret when people would be resting. One day, he entered the city for this purpose and saw that a Copt and an Israelite were fighting. When the

14. And one day when he entered the city unheeded, he saw two people fighting. One of them belonged to his own faction and the other belonged to the faction of his enemies. So, the one who belonged to his faction requested him to help against the person who was from his opponents. Then Moses threw a punch at him and killed him. He said: "This is a satanic act done by me; indeed, he is an open enemy who leads astray." He prayed: "O My Lord! I have been unjust to my soul; pardon me." So, God pardoned him. Indeed, He is most Forgiving and Merciful.

latter saw him, he asked for his help. The sense of honour in Moses (sws) induced him to come forward and help his oppressed brother and he tried to separate the two. However, it is evident that the Copt, because of his arrogance, came after Moses (sws). While defending himself, Moses (sws) punched him and such was the strength of the punch that the Copt died on the spot. Moses (sws) never had the intention to kill the Copt, nor did he ever envisage this situation. When this accident took place without any intention whatsoever, he regretted his folly and sought forgiveness from his Lord: "Lord! I have been very unjust to myself; so forgive me" Since this mistake was not deliberate and then he immediately repented for it as well, he was forgiven by God straight away and he was also divinely conveyed this forgiveness by the words that God is الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ (most forgiving ever-merciful).

It is mentioned earlier that God blessed Moses (sws) with wisdom and knowledge together with the full bloom of youth. This repentance was a consequence of his wisdom. If he had merely been a strong young lad, he would have been extremely proud of this feat. In particular, he would have regarded the killing a Copt to be an eternal achievement. But even in the case of an enemy, he regarded his unintentional mistake to be a crime and instantly asked God for forgiveness. It should be kept in mind that this matter was between himself and his God. There was no possibility of any justice that Moses (sws) could expect from the government, keeping in view the circumstances that existed in Egypt at that time.

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَآ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ فَلَنْ اَكُوْنَ ظَهِيْرًا لِّلْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾[15]

Favours increase the gratitude of the righteous for the Almighty. So, when Moses (sws) was shown favour by God who forgave him, he promised to himself that he will never help criminals in future. These words of his do not necessitate that he helped the Israelite considering him to be a criminal. The fact is that what he did was because he regarded the Israelite to be innocent and did it at the latter's pleading. Also, keeping in view the circumstances of those times, he believed that the Copt must be the oppressor and the Israelite the oppressed. The Almighty, while forgiving Moses (sws), did not say that he was innocent and that the Copt was the oppressor. In fact, He forgave Moses (sws) after regarding him to have committed a mistake. From this Moses (sws) concluded that though he wanted to help the oppressed, he ended up helping the oppressor because he did not properly investigate the matter. Hence, for the future, he promised himself that he will not help anyone without investigating facts and that he will help only that person whose innocence is known. Thus, the very next day, when he saw the same Israelite fighting with another Copt, and, as before, he called him to help, Moses (sws) scolded him by saying that he seemed to be a mischievous person.

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15. He said: "Since you have shown you grace to me, I promise that I will never be among those who help wrongdoers."

فَاَصۡبَحَ فِی الۡمَدِیۡنَۃِ خَآئِفًا یَّتَرَقَّبُ فَاِذَا الَّذِی اسۡتَنۡصَرَہٗ بِالۡاَمۡسِ یَسۡتَصۡرِخُہٗ ؕ قَالَ لَہٗ مُوۡسٰۤی اِنَّکَ لَغَوِیٌّ مُّبِیۡنٌ ﴿۱۸﴾[16]

The next day Moses (sws) entered the city while fearing the surroundings and looking around secretively. In his normal routine too, he was very cautious while going to the city, as is mentioned earlier. However, after this incident, he must have become even more worried about the reaction and general response that he and his nation may have to face as a result. Meanwhile, he saw the same Israelite asking for help once again. This time, Moses (sws) scolded him, telling him that he seemed to be clearly a mischievous person. The fact that he was a mischievous person was evident from what had happened the previous day, when he been also involved in a brawl with another person. This was clear testimony to his mischievous nature. Another reason for Moses (sws) deducing that the Israelite was a prankster was the words of forgiveness of the Almighty, that he was at fault in thinking that the Israelite was at fault and he had not properly investigated the matter. Thus, he fulfilled what he had promised the Almighty the previous day: he would not help any wrongdoer. So, this time, he did not immediately step forward for the help of the Israelite. But, assessing the situation, he warned him that he was a belligerent and mischievous person.

فَلَمَّاۤ اَنۡ اَرَادَ اَنۡ یَّبۡطِشَ بِالَّذِیۡ ہُوَ عَدُوٌّ لَّہُمَا ۬ۙ قَالَ یٰمُوۡسٰۤی اَتُرِیۡدُ اَنۡ تَقۡتُلَنِیۡ کَمَا قَتَلۡتَ نَفۡسًۢا بِالۡاَمۡسِ ۖ اِنۡ تُرِیۡدُ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ تَکُوۡنَ جَبَّارًا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ وَ مَا تُرِیۡدُ اَنۡ تَکُوۡنَ مِنَ الۡمُصۡلِحِیۡنَ ﴿۱۹﴾[17]

Before the word اَنۡ, an appropriate verb is suppressed, viz "when this happened" or "when the matter reached this extent". It is evident from these words that, initially Moses (sws) tried to verbally reconcile the two; however, when this did not work he tried to disentangle the Copt who is called by the words عَدُوٌّ لَّہُمَا here i.e. the enemy of both Moses (sws) and the Israelites. The reason for this is evident: he was an obvious enemy of the Israelite while his enmity with Moses (sws) was due to nationalistic reasons as well as because he had become a thorn in the eyes of the Copts due to his reformatory measures.

Moses (sws) tried to get hold of the Copt, but he first scolded the Israelite because of which the latter thought that this time he would receive his punch. In this situation, he shouted that it was his turn of being punched to death the way Moses (sws) had killed a person yesterday. In this way, he exposed the secret because of his

16. Thus, the next day he entered the city scared and probing around. He then saw the same person who had sought help yesterday again asking him for help today. Moses said: "You are a very evident mischievous person."

17. Thus, when he made up his mind to grasp the person who was the enemy of both, he cried out: "Moses! Do you want to kill me the way you killed a person yesterday. You want to become a tyrant in this land. You do not want to be among those who set right affairs."

foolishness. Some people think that the words … يٰمُوْسٰٓى اَتُرِيْدُ اَنْ تَقْتُلَنِيْ were uttered by the Copt. However, this is not tenable because firstly the incident was still a secret and secondly the Copts never regarded Moses (sws) to be a reformer.

Consider next the part: اِنْ تُرِيْدُ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ جَبَّارًا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَمَا تُرِيْدُ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِيْنَ The word جَبَّارٌ here means "one who is dictatorial," "one who is out of control." So, not only did the Israelite expose the secret, he even criticised Moses (sws) by saying that people thought that he wanted to redress and reform the situation; yet it seemed that this was not the case and that he wanted to be a despotic and tyrannical person. This statement, on the one hand, depicts the character of mean people: when a person helps them, they regard him to be a reformer; but if he tries to stop them from an evil, they not only regard him to be a highly repressive person, but also become spies against him and begin exposing his secrets. On the other hand, the character of Moses (sws) too becomes evident, that he was regarded by his nation to be a ray of hope to reform and set right affairs.

وَجَآءَ رَجُلٌ مِّنْ اَقْصَا الْمَدِيْنَةِ يَسْعٰى ۗ قَالَ يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنَّ الْمَلَاَ يَاْتَمِرُوْنَ بِكَ لِيَقْتُلُوْكَ فَاخْرُجْ اِنِّيْ لَكَ مِنَ النّٰصِحِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾[18]

As is indicated before, Moses (sws) was already being regarded with dread and suspicion by Pharaoh's people; however, when this incident took place and its secret became known too, from the tongue of an Israelite, it was but natural that the Pharaoh's people would have fumed with anger against him and would have started to plan to eliminate him.

The city which was the centre of the Pharaoh's chiefs and courtiers was away from the settlement of the Israelites, as has been referred to earlier. That is why it is alluded to by the expression اَقْصَا الْمَدِيْنَةِ. The verse states that from the farthest end of the city a person came running to Moses (sws) to inform him that they were planning to kill him. He seemed to have gathered this information. He introduced himself as a well-wisher of Moses (sws) and advised him to immediately leave the place. No details are mentioned here about that person; but in Sūrah al-Mu'min a true believer from the clan of the Pharaoh is mentioned in detail. He belonged to the royal family. He was a well-wisher of Moses (sws) from the very start and in the later stages also, as shall be seen in Sūrah al-Mu'min, he strongly defended Moses (sws) before the Pharaoh and his courtiers. For this reason, in all probability, it seems that this was the same person.

The words اِنِّيْ لَكَ مِنَ النّٰصِحِيْنَ were uttered by that person, because, in the atmosphere of distrust that existed between the Israelites and the Copts, Moses (sws) could likely have thought that a Copt was trying to over-awe him in this way. It is evident from the word يَسْعٰى that, as soon as that person thought that the matter had become serious, in

18. And a person came running from the far end of the city. He said: "Moses! The high-ups of the government are consulting to kill you; so, go away from here; I am from among your well-wishers."

fact, dangerous, in spite of being among the courtiers, he came running to Moses (sws) at his settlement. This effort undertaken by him is a shining example of this sympathy and concern.

فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَآئِفًا يَّتَرَقَّبُ ۬ قَالَ رَبِّ نَجِّنِيْ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٢١﴾[19]

After this, Moses (sws), in a state of dread, moved out of Egypt cautiously and since there was a chance that the Pharaoh's forces would pursue him, he supplicated to God by the above words "Lord! Protect me from the evil of these wrongdoers."

وَلَمَّا تَوَجَّهَ تِلْقَآءَ مَدْيَنَ قَالَ عَسٰى رَبِّيْٓ اَنْ يَّهْدِيَنِيْ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيْلِ ﴿٢٢﴾[20]

It is evident from the style of the verse that at the time of his departure from Egypt, he had not ascertained his destination. It was later that he decided that he had to go to Madyan, and about Madyan too, he was not clear where to go and to whom to go. Without any such prior decision, he just turned in the direction of Madyan, hoping that the Almighty, Who is the guardian of His creatures, will guide him to the right place and make him reach such a place. It may be kept in mind that this journey of Moses (sws) was not of the nature of migration that actually took place after he was assigned the responsibility of propet hood. The established practice of God about this type of migration is that He Himself determines its time and also explains all its phases Himself to His prophet. However, in this particular journey Moses (sws) did not have any such guidance. He just embarked upon it while reposing full confidence in God and it was this trust that actually guided him. Viewed thus, this incident carries a great message for all men and women created by God who face trials for the cause of truth. If they take a step while trusting God, they will be guided by Him, even though they do not have any clear glad tidings from God in this regard.

وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَآءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ اُمَّةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ يَسْقُوْنَ ۖ۫ وَ وَجَدَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِمُ امْرَاَتَيْنِ تَذُوْدٰنِ ۚ قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمَا ؕ قَالَتَا لَا نَسْقِيْ حَتّٰى يُصْدِرَ الرِّعَآءُ ؕ وَاَبُوْنَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيْرٌ ﴿٢٣﴾[21]

The word مَآءَ may refer to water and also to a well. The Torah mentions a well.

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19. So, he went away from there scared and probing around and he prayed: "Lord! Deliver me from the nation of the oppressive."

20. And when he turned towards Madyan, he prayed: "Hopefully my Lord will guide me to the straight path."

21. And when he reached the well of Madyan, he saw a swarm of people who were providing water to their flocks and two women aside from them who were waiting with their goats. He asked them: "What is your issue?" They replied: "We do not make our goats drink unless the shepherds take away their goats and our father is very old."

Mountain springs are also no different from wells. In general, the routes that reach them are very narrow. Hence, benefitting from their water for drinking is not easy, especially when they are crowded as well.

When Moses (sws) reached Madyan, he sat at one of its wells or fountains. There he saw a bunch of shepherds watering their flocks and also two women who were waiting for their turn. It is evident from the word تَذُوْدٰنِ that their herd had reached the fountain and was pushing forward to drink water from it, but the two women were being forced to pull them back. Moses (sws) asked them about the problem they were facing and why were they standing behind with their herd. They replied that their father had grown very old and as a result, they had to attend to their herd and that it was not possible for them to force their way into the crowd. They had, therefore, decided to wait for the other shepherds to leave and unless the latter left with their herds, it was not possible for them to provide water to their flock.

فَسَقٰى لَهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَلّٰٓى اِلَى الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ لِمَآ اَنْزَلْتَ اِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيْرٌ ﴿٢٤﴾[22]

After listening to the tale of these upright ladies, Moses (sws) was spurred to come to their rescue. He got up and took their flocks to drink water and, once he had done this job, he turned back and sat in the same shadow he was sitting beneath earlier. He then prayed to God: "God, whatever you send down to me at this time, I am in need of it."

Here some points are especially worthy of note.

Firstly, Moses (sws) regarded with great significance that two upright ladies had to go through the fatigue of making their flock drink water and they were standing helplessly before the fountain, while holding back their flock. This sentiment of Moses (sws) is evident from his question: مَا خَطْبُكُمَا. In Arabic, the word خَطْبٌ is used for some important matter. Hence, concealed in his question, was the implied meaning of asking about the problems and circumstances they were facing, since they had to attend to a rather arduous task and, as a result, were standing withholding their flocks. The ladies replied to him after fully comprehending the question that they had to do this because their father had grown quite old and they were holding back their herd because they were not able to push into the male crowd. It is evident from this depiction that in those circumstances also, the spheres of work of men and women were regarded as different. If women were compelled to take up a task belonging to the men's sphere, they would do so, but only because of compulsion. And that too not by working along side men and within them, but with full caution and decency by remaining as far apart as possible from the male company. Observe, on the one hand, this societal norm that existed in the times of Shu'ayb, which is evident from this

22. So, he made their goats drink for them, then withdrew to a shade and prayed: "Lord! I am in need of whatever good you send down to me at this time."

incident and on the other, observe what our reformers of this era say that the sphere of work for both men and women is exactly the same and hence both should work hand in hand in every field. The arguments offered by these people are from the poor women of villages and the results are drawn from them for the women of the cities.

The second thing that needs to be noted in this incident is that Moses (sws) fulfilled his obligation to help the weak with full diligence as it was a requirement decency and courtesy. However, after that he did not even utter a single word expressing his own worry or need, or the pangs of his travels. On the contrary, he returned to the shade of the tree from where he had got up earlier to help them. Here, he prayed to God that he had come to this place as his destination and it has now arrived. He asked him that he was now waiting for His grace and mercy and that he was in need of whatever good He will send to him at that moment. Words are at loss to express the eloquence of this prayer. Only people of taste can understand it. Since the prayer was made at the right time, with the right sentiments and in the right words, its consequence manifested itself forthwith. The two women mentioned this good deed of Moses (sws) to their father and in this way the door was opened for Moses (sws) to acquire the good he had prayed for.

فَجَآءَتْهُ اِحْدٰىهُمَا تَمْشِيْ عَلَى اسْتِحْيَآءٍ ۫ قَالَتْ اِنَّ اَبِيْ يَدْعُوْكَ لِيَجْزِيَكَ اَجْرَ مَا سَقَيْتَ لَنَا ؕ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهٗ وَقَصَّ عَلَيْهِ الْقَصَصَ ۙ قَالَ لَا تَخَفْ ۟ نَجَوْتَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۲۵﴾[23]

While Moses (sws) was still sitting in the shade of the tree, one of them returned walking bashfully and modestly and told him that their father was calling him to compensate him for his effort in taking their herd to drink. It is evident from the Old Testament that, since on that day the two returned before their usual time, Shu'ayb (sws) asked them for the reason of their early return. They replied that on that day an Egyptian had done a good turn to them and taken their herd to drink. Shu'ayb (sws) asked them why they had left him alone and that they show go and fetch him so that he may have food with them. While complying with the directive of the father, one of the daughters came over to Moses (sws) and informed him that her father was calling him so that he may reward him for his service. At that time, Moses (sws) was in great need of such help. He considered it to be divine help and at once started to make his way to Shu'ayb (sws).

Here the words تَمْشِيْ عَلَى اسْتِحْيَآءٍ need to be specially noted. The words مِنْ دُوْنِهِمُ in an earlier verse show that these two were standing on one side, away from the rest of shepherds. It has also been mentioned earlier that they had stated their reason for standing back: it was because of the crowd of the male shepherds that they have to

23. Thus one of them shyly came over. She said: "My father is calling you that he may reward you for providing water to our flock for us." So, when he came and recounted before him all the story, he said: "Now fear not. You have been delivered from the oppressive."

wait until these shepherds were done. It is then stated that when she came to call Moses (sws), she was shy. It was not that she came boldly before him. On the contrary, she came before him in a reserved way while covering herself properly. The question arises that why has the Qur'ān narrated the minute details of this event in such a detailed manner. What else could be the answer to this question except that the Qur'ān wants to highlight, at every step, the mannerisms and ways of decency and how civilized women should behave before men. It is these norms of decency that the Qur'ān has described in the form of some regulations in Sūrah al-Nūr and Sūrah al-Aḥzāb. I have explained these regulations in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Nūr and, God willing, they will be further explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb. It may be kept in mind that the mannerisms described here are of women who had to shepherd their herd. So, when for them such is the desirable way, one can imagine what is desirable for those who are not faced with any such compelling circumstances.

The words فَلَمَّا جَآءَهٗ وَقَصَّ عَلَيْهِ الْقَصَصَ ۙ قَالَ لَا تَخَفْ ۖ نَجَوْتَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ refer to the fact that at the request of Shu'ayb, Moses (sws) came over to him and narrated before him his tale. After listening to him, Shu'ayb asked him not to worry: God had delivered him from unjust people. It was as if Moses (sws) got glad tidings of the acceptance of his invocation that he had made when he was departing from Egypt by the words: رَبِّ نَجِّنِىْ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ as cited earlier in verse 21 of this *sūrah*.

قَالَتْ اِحْدٰىهُمَا يٰٓاَبَتِ اسْتَاْجِرْهُ ۖ اِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَاْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْاَمِيْنُ ﴿٢٦﴾[24]

A repetition of the word اِحْدٰىهُمَا shows that the recommendation stated in this verse was made by the other daughter of Shu'ayb (sws). If this recommendation had been made by the same daughter who had gone to call Moses (sws), then there was no need to repeat the word اِحْدٰىهُمَا in this verse.

Shu'ayb (sws) was, in fact, in need of a helping hand for his herd, and it is evident from concomitant indications that he was looking for an appropriate person. For this reason, his daughter recommended Moses (sws) for this purpose. The best helper is he who is strong and trustworthy. Moses (sws) had both these qualities. As far as physical strength is concerned, it can be judged through the eyes. However, trustworthiness and honesty can only truly be known through experience. In normal circumstances, this experience takes a lot of time. Yet, in some circumstances, it takes place at the first encounter. A person's forehead and eyes bear witness to his character. One of Shu'ayb's (sws) daughters had first-hand experience of the decency, honour and purity of Moses (sws). Then the tale of chivalry Moses (sws) recounted before Shu'ayb (sws) must have made it evident to him that if such a determined and strong person did not have trustworthiness and honesty, then who else would have

24. One of them said: "Father! Keep this man in your service because a person who is strong and trustworthy is the best of those who can serve.

these traits.

قَالَ اِنِّيْٓ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ اُنْكِحَكَ اِحْدَى ابْنَتَيَّ هٰتَيْنِ عَلٰٓى اَنْ تَاْجُرَنِيْ ثَمٰنِيَ حِجَجٍ ۚ فَاِنْ اَتْمَمْتَ عَشْرًا فَمِنْ عِنْدِكَ ۚ وَمَآ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ اَشُقَّ عَلَيْكَ ۭ سَتَجِدُنِيْٓ اِنْ شَاۗءَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾[25]

Shu'ayb (sws) proposed to Moses (sws) for one of his daughter's hand with the condition that he work for him for eight years and, if Moses (sws) so desired, he could increase this period to ten years; there would be no pressure on him in this regard. He further told Moses (sws) that the latter would find him to be an upright person. It is evident from concomitant factors that Shu'ayb (sws) must have made this proposal at the behest of a divine indication and his words وَمَآ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ اَشُقَّ عَلَيْكَ were actually meant to grant time to Moses (sws) to fully reflect and make a decision and not take a decision under any compulsion.

Here, no discussion needs to be done on the issue of *mahr*. It relates to the will of the wife. If the father wishes to have her married on a permissible condition and the wife also agrees to it, then there is nothing in the *sharī'ah* that hinders it.

قَالَ ذٰلِكَ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكَ ۭ اَيَّمَا الْاَجَلَيْنِ قَضَيْتُ فَلَا عُدْوَانَ عَلَيَّ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰي مَا نَقُوْلُ وَكِيْلٌ ﴿٢٨﴾[26]

Moses (sws) accepted both the proposal and the condition. He replied that whichever of these two periods he was able to fulfill should be left to his discretion. The word نَقُوْلُ connotes promise and pledge. The last part of the verse would thus mean: "We make God a witness to the agreement We are now making."

فَلَمَّا قَضٰى مُوْسَى الْاَجَلَ وَسَارَ بِاَهْلِهٖٓ اٰنَسَ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّوْرِ نَارًا ۚ قَالَ لِاَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوْٓا اِنِّيْٓ اٰنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّيْٓ اٰتِيْكُمْ مِّنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ اَوْ جَذْوَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾[27]

After completing the promised time, Moses (sws) left with his family for Egypt. It is not specified either by the Qur'ān or the Torah whether the term completed was eight years or ten. However, it is evident from the Torah that with his two children besides his wife, when they reached the mount of Ṭūr, the night was dark and it was cold too.

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25. The old man said: "I want to wed one of my girls to you on the condition that you will serve me for eight years. If you take this term to ten years, then this will be your will. I do not impose any hardship on you. God willing, you will find me a decent person."

26. He replied: "This agreement is concluded between you and me. There shall be no compulsion on me regarding whichever of the two periods I complete. And God is a witness to the agreement we are making."

27. So, when Moses (sws) completed the term and departed with his family, he saw a flame towards the mount of Sinai. He said to his family: "Stay here that I may go and bring some news from there or bring an ignited piece of flame so that you may warm yourselves."

Finding the way in pitch darkness was also difficult. In the meantime, he saw something shining from the side of the mount of Ṭūr. He told his wife and children to stay there whilst he would go to find out what was shining out there. If he could find some people there, he may be able to find out the way from them or bring an live ember so that they could warm themselves from its heat.

فَلَمَّآ اَتٰىهَا نُوْدِيَ مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْوَادِ الْاَيْمَنِ فِي الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبٰرَكَةِ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ اَنْ يّٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنِّيْٓ اَنَا اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾[28]

All parts of this verse have been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah Ṭahā and Sūrah al-Naml earlier. When Moses (sws) reached the place where he had sighted the fire, he heard a voice from a tree that was situated at a holy place that was near the blessed valley of the mountain. It said: "It is me, God of the worlds."

Here, three loci are mentioned that determine the origin of the voice. Firstly, it came from the blessed valley. Secondly, this valley was in a blessed area. Thirdly, it came from a tree. The purpose of all these determinants is that Moses (sws) did not hear this voice from some vague or ambiguous origin. It came from a specific and known origin. It was from a sacred tree that was in a blessed place situated in a holy valley. If a certain valley, place and tree are blessed, then it is evidence to the fact that the Almighty has chosen them for the manifestation of His radiance. An essential consequence of this is that such an area be the place where His angels frequent and which is totally pure and secure. Readers may well take a look at verse 8 of Sūrah al-Naml.

While the first part of the verse expressed the purity and exalted nature of the place of origin of the voice, the last part of the verse expresses the contents of the voice, viz. اِنِّيْٓ اَنَا اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ which Moses (sws) heard the foremost. It was said that he had come to fetch fire but the place did not have fire; it was actually God, Lord of the worlds, Who is found there. The Almighty actually introduced Himself by some words. The expression رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ has a very broad connotation. For this reason, the same subject is discussed at some other instances in some other words. For example, the words used in verse 9 of Sūrah al-Naml are: إِنَّهُ أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (It is Me, God, the Powerful, the Wise).This is just an explanation of the expression رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ.

وَاَنْ اَلْقِ عَصَاكَ ۭ فَلَمَّا رَاٰهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَاَنَّهَا جَاۗنٌّ وَّلّٰى مُدْبِرًا وَّلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ ۭ يٰمُوْسٰٓى اَقْبِلْ وَلَا تَخَفْ ۣ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الْاٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾[29]

At the same time, Moses (sws) was directed to throw down his staff. When Moses (sws) complied, he saw that the staff was moving about like a serpent. He was struck

28. So, when he came near it in the blessed place from the side of the valley of Ayman, he heard a voice from the tree: "Moses! I am God, Lord of the worlds and that you throw down you staff."

29. Then when he saw it slithering as if it was a serpent, he turned and fled and then did not look back. Moses! Come forward and fear not; you are absolutely secure.

with fear to see this and ran backwards in such a way that he did not have the courage to even look back. The expression وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ has been explained under verse 11 of Sūrah al-Naml.

Prophets of God face the initial experience of prophet hood in a sudden and unexpected manner. Neither do they have any concept about it nor do they have any desire for it. For this reason, initially they feel worried. Gradually, the Almighty makes them used to this experience. As far as the soothsayers, magicians and false oracles are concerned, they already have a scheme in their minds for which they work hard and undertake all sorts of routines. When some scheme to mislead the masses dawns upon them, they consider it to be a great success. However, the revered prophets of God are totally bereft of such machinations. For this reason, when they are given some miracle, it is a totally unique thing for them. The biggest feat of the magicians that belonged to the nation to whom Moses (sws) was to be sent was that they turned staffs and ropes into serpents. To achieve this feat, they would go through various hard routines and exercises. When they succeeded in it, they would consider it to be the greatest achievement of their lives. Contrary to this, when God converted the staff of Moses (sws) into a snake, he became afraid and ran from it. Here, the Almighty has specially highlighted this very aspect so that Moses's (sws) reaction when he saw the miracle which the Pharaoh and his people regarded to be a product of magic could be known.

When Moses (sws) was overcome by this sudden fear, the Almighty assured him in a very affectionate way: يٰمُوْسٰٓى اَقْبِلْ وَ لَا تَخَفْ ۖ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الْاٰمِنِيْنَ. Moses (sws) should come forward, pick it up; there was no danger for him in it. The danger actually lurked for his enemy. He was secure from every form of peril. In verse 10 of Sūrah al-Naml, the words used are: لَا يَخَافُ لَدَيَّ الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ (messengers of God should have no fear in My presence). What is implied is that Moses (sws) is God's messenger. God equips His messengers with special weaponry. The danger that arises from it is for their enemies and not for them.

اُسْلُكْ يَدَكَ فِيْ جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَآءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوْٓءٍ ۫ وَّ اضْمُمْ اِلَيْكَ جَنَاحَكَ مِنَ الرَّهْبِ فَذٰنِكَ بُرْهَانٰنِ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَا۟ئِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا فٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾[30]

Expressed in this verse is the manner in which the second miracle given to Moses (sws) would manifest itself: he should insert his hand in his armpit; when he takes it out, it will be pure white and this whiteness will not be because of any sickness. The words وَّ اضْمُمْ اِلَيْكَ جَنَاحَكَ مِنَ الرَّهْبِ describe the way in which the hand should be inserted: just as someone presses his arm because of fear, he too should insert his hand in his

30. Put your hand in your armpit. It will come out white without any ailment and draw back your arm the way it is drawn back in fear. Thus these are two signs from your Lord to go to the Pharaoh and his courtiers. Indeed, they are a very insolent people.

armpit and press it. In Sūrah Ṭāhā, the words used are:

وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ اِلٰى جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَآءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوْٓءٍ (٢٠:٢٢)

And press your hand towards your armpit; it will emerge white from there without any illness. (20:22)

The expression مِنَ الرَّهْبِ occurs here the way مِنَ الذُّلِ and مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ occur at other instances in the Qur'ān.[31]

A verb is suppressed before اِلٰى in فَذٰنِكَ بُرْهَانٰنِ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَ مَلَا۟ئِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا فٰسِقِيْنَ. Examples of such suppression can be seen in the earlier *sūrahs* and are forthcoming as well. The implied meaning is: "Go to the Pharaoh and his people – with these two clear signs from your Lord – to warn them." The reason why he has been given these signs and sent to the Pharaoh and his people is stated in the last part of the verse: اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا فٰسِقِيْنَ: they are very defiant and rebellious. He should go to them and inform them of the consequences of this rebellious behaviour and communicate the truth to them conclusively through these clear signs.

قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ قَتَلْتُ مِنْهُمْ نَفْسًا فَاَخَافُ اَنْ يَّقْتُلُوْنِ ﴿٣٣﴾[32]

Moses (sws) in compliance to God's directive became ready for his assignment. However, at the same time, he expressed a worry: he had killed a person and feared that they would kill him as soon as they see him. In other words, he meant that in all probability they would have forgotten his crime, since he would be going to his people after eight or ten years; however, if he went to them as a messenger of God, how would they let him go free.

وَاَخِيْ هٰرُوْنُ هُوَ اَفْصَحُ مِنِّيْ لِسَانًا فَاَرْسِلْهُ مَعِيَ رِدْاً يُّصَدِّقُنِيْٓ ۡ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اَنْ يُّكَذِّبُوْنِ ﴿٣٤﴾[33]

The word رِدْءٌ means "helper." At other places the word وَزِير is used.

The word يُصَدِّقُنِي means يُؤَيِّدُنِي (he may help me).

Expressed in this verse is another difficulty that Moses (sws) had. It is evident in the exegesis of Sūrah Ṭāhā that he felt that he was not a good orator in line with the great responsibility imposed on him. For this reason, he requested the Almighty to make his brother Aaron his helper since he was very eloquent. The words used in Sūrah Ṭāhā are: كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيْرًا وَنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيْرًا (so that both of us can together extol You as much as possible and spread your word as far as possible, 20:33-34)).

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31. See, respectively: 17:111 and 17:24. (*Translator*)

32. He said: "Lord! I have killed one of them; so I fear that they will kill me."

33. "And my brother Aaron is more eloquent than me. Send him with me also as my helper that he may support me. I fear that these people will reject me."

The words إِنِّيٓ أَخَافُ أَن يُكَذِّبُونِ express the fear of Moses (sws) that they will not easily listen to him and will in fact deny him. So God should help him through his eloquent brother so that both of them could convey the truth conclusively with full force.

قَالَ سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَكَ بِأَخِيكَ وَنَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا سُلْطَٰنًا فَلَا يَصِلُونَ إِلَيْكُمَا ۚ بِـَٔايَٰتِنَآ ۚ أَنتُمَا وَمَنِ ٱتَّبَعَكُمَا ٱلْغَٰلِبُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾[34]

The word سُلْطَان here means "dominance, majesty and awe."

There are two possibilities in the case of بِـَٔايَٰتِنَآ. One of them is that it relates to نَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا سُلْطَٰنًا. In this case, it would mean: "We will strike your awe in the people of the Pharaoh through miracles." The other option is to regard a verb to be suppressed before it. An example of such suppression can be seen in verse 32 earlier.

The verse implies that the Almighty accepted the request of Moses (sws) regarding Aaron (sws). At the same time, God assured him that He would strike such awe in the hearts of the people of the Pharaoh that they would not even dare to harm him. Thus, it is a fact that even before the contest, the Pharaoh and his people were so over-awed by Moses (sws) that, in spite of their desire to get rid of him, they could not dare do so. The greatest reason of this that becomes evident from a study of the Torah is that the Pharaoh and his chiefs did not regard Moses (sws) to be a liar. On the contrary, they were fully convinced that he was a truthful person. However, since his message was regarded by them to be against their interests, they were not prepared to accept it. Yet, they knew that if they tried to harm him in any way, they would not be spared. For this reason, in spite of all their enmity and malice, they dared not kill him. It is evident from the Torah that whenever a calamity descended on Egypt, they would request Moses (sws) to pray to God to avert it.

فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُم مُّوسَىٰ بِـَٔايَٰتِنَا بَيِّنَٰتٍ قَالُوا۟ مَا هَٰذَآ إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّفْتَرًى وَمَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَٰذَا فِىٓ ءَابَآئِنَا ٱلْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾[35]

When Moses (sws) came over to the Pharaoh and his nation with these indubitable signs, they regarded these to be a product of magic and began spreading propaganda against his call towards monotheism. They contended that his teachings were against the traditions of their forefathers.

By the expression سِحْرٌ مُّفْتَرًى, they meant that these miracles were worked by Moses (sws) through magic, but he falsely ascribed them to God in order to strike awe and fear in them. The words مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَٰذَا فِىٓ ءَابَآئِنَا ٱلْأَوَّلِينَ refer to the call of Moses (sws) towards monotheism. In other words, they contended that this claim of Moses (sws) that he was a messenger of God was uniquely strange. They had not heard about any God of the

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34. God said: "We will also strengthen your arm with your brother and bestow a special awe on you both so that they are not able to harm you. So, go with Our signs both of you and those who follow you will remain dominant."

35. So, when Moses came to them with Our very clear signs, they said: "This is merely a magic fabricated and we have never heard of such things from our predecessors."

worlds from their forefathers. Verse 38 ahead will further explain this. Another instance where precisely this subject is brought up is: مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهٰذَا فِي الْمِلَّةِ الْآخِرَةِ (٣٨:٧) (we have not heard of this in this later period (38:7)).

وَقَالَ مُوْسٰى رَبِّيْٓ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ جَآءَ بِالْهُدٰى مِنْ عِنْدِهٖ وَمَنْ تَكُوْنُ لَهٗ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ۝٣٧[36]

This was a future challenge thrown to them by Moses (sws): they were regarding him to be a fabricator, while the fact was that his Lord knew who had come to them with His guidance and who were the people who were intentionally denying; similarly, it was his Lord Who knew those who would succeed in the Hereafter and those who would end up as utter losers. In other words, Moses (sws) proclaimed in a very eloquent and soft way that his companions, God willing, would remain dominant and succeed and his opponents would be humiliated and routed.

It is certain that those who deny the guidance sent by God will be unjust to themselves and such unjust people never succeed. It is evident that a parallel sentence is suppressed. I have explained it.

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمَلَاُ مَا عَلِمْتُ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرِيْ ۚ فَاَوْقِدْ لِيْ يٰهَامٰنُ عَلَى الطِّيْنِ فَاجْعَلْ لِّيْ صَرْحًا لَّعَلِّيْٓ اَطَّلِعُ اِلٰٓى اِلٰهِ مُوْسٰى ۙ وَاِنِّىْ لَاَظُنُّهٗ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ۝٣٨[37]

Hāmān has been mentioned earlier in the *sūrah*. It is evident from here as well that he had the same status in the court of the Pharaoh as that of a prime minister or at least a minister of construction and development.

The expression اَوْقِدْ عَلَى الطِّيْنِ can mean to make a kiln of bricks and can also mean to build a building of clay and heat it with fire. It is evident from a study of history that a common way of construction in Nineveh and Egypt was to build a house with mud and then have it heated strongly with flames. This would create designs on the walls and protect it from the effects of rain and wind.

The preposition اِلٰى in لَّعَلِّيْٓ اَطَّلِعُ اِلٰٓى اِلٰهِ مُوْسٰى indicates there exists a *taḍmīn* here. In other words, the whole statement would be to the effect: لعلى أطلع على الصرح فانظر إلى إله موسى (so that I can peep at the building and look at the God of Moses). Obviously, these words were meant to make fun of Moses (sws). It is also evident from verse 47 of Sūrah al-Zukhruf that these words were meant for this purpose.

The Pharaoh first addressed his courtiers by saying that he did not know of the God of the worlds whose messenger Moses (sws) was posing to be. He contended that he

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36. And Moses said: "My Lord knows full well the one who has come from Him with guidance and whose fate in the Hereafter is good. The unjust will never attain success."

37. And the Pharaoh said: "Courtiers! I am not aware of any god for you except myself. So, O Hāmān! Ignite bricks of clay for me and build for me a tall palace that I may peep on the God of Moses. I regard him to be liar."

regarded himself alone to be their deity. In other words, people must be very aware of this mischief worked by him. After this, he addressed Hāmān and told him to make a kiln of bricks and make a tall building so that he could climb on it and peep on the Lord of Moses (sws) as to where he was sitting. He regarded this person to be an absolute liar. It may be kept in mind that at times, autocrats and tyrants make fun of absolutely evident facts in this way. Their blind followers construe this scoffing as an argument in their favour and many a foolish ones think that there is truth in this. It may well be that the devotees of the Pharaoh would have taken this mocking comment seriously because they regarded the Pharaoh to be an avatar of their Sun God. How could it be difficult for an avatar to take a peep into the sides and borders of the skies? In Sūrah al-Mu'min, the following statement of the Pharaoh is cited: يٰهَامٰنُ ابْنِ لِيْ صَرْحًا لَّعَلِّيْٓ اَبْلُغُ الْاَسْبَابَ اَسْبَابَ السَّمٰوٰتِ (٤٠: ٣٦-٣٧) ("O Hāmān! Build me a tower that I may reach the borders – the borders of the heavens," (40:36-37)). In this respect, it could have been a scheme hatched by him to befool the masses.

وَاسْتَكْبَرَ هُوَ وَجُنُوْدُهٗ فِي الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ اِلَيْنَا لَا يُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾[38]

The expression بَغْيٌ بِغَيْرِ الحَقّ has been explained at an appropriate place of this exegesis. The meaning of إِسْتِكْبَارٌ بِغَيْرِ الحَقّ (which occurs in this verse) is not different. Only the One Who has created the heavens and the earth and Who is administering them has the right to express greatness and superiority. If they, who neither have any share in the creation of the heavens and the earth nor in governing them, show arrogance, then this only shows their baselessness. The Creator of this universe does not give much respite to such arrogance. It may be kept in mind that disobeying the law of the real King of this world also amount to إِسْتِكْبَارٌ بِغَيْرِ الحَقّ and this is nothing but following the example set by the Pharaoh.

The words وَظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ اِلَيْنَا لَا يُرْجَعُوْنَ state the reason for this arrogance: they thought that God would let them go without questioning and that they will not return to Him for any accountability.

فَاَخَذْنٰهُ وَجُنُوْدَهٗ فَنَبَذْنٰهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ ۚ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾[39]

This verse depicts the fate of their arrogance: God seized the Pharaoh and his armies and threw them in the sea. The scheme implemented by God to seize them has been described in detail in the previous *sūrahs*, in particular, Sūrah Ṭāhā. The words فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ direct attention to the reality for which this tale has been recounted.

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38. And he and his armies showed arrogance without any reason and they thought that they will never have to return to Us.

39. So, We seized him and his armies. Thus We flung them into the sea. Then see the fate the unjust met!

They sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and remind and warn the arrogant pharaohs of his times who had adopted the same attitude with his message as the one adopted by the Pharaoh and his chiefs and supporters about Moses (sws).

وَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ اَىِٕمَّةً يَّدْعُوْنَ اِلَى النَّارِ ۚ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَا يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾[40]

The word جَعَلْنَا here encompasses the meaning of أَمْهَلْنَا. Examples of this usage can be seen in the earlier *sūrahs*. Also there occurs a suppression of an incomplete verb before: يَّدْعُوْنَ.

This verse further explains the arrogance of these people alluded to in the previous verse: God gave them respite in this world and they stuck to their task of becoming leaders who would call others to Hell, and, on the Day of Judgement, such will be their plight that they will not receive help from anywhere. All those who considered them their leaders in the previous world will forsake them. Each person will be engrossed in his own self. Neither will the leaders be of any benefit to the followers nor will the followers be of any avail to the leaders.

وَاَتْبَعْنٰهُمْ فِيْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً ۚ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ هُمْ مِّنَ الْمَقْبُوْحِيْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾[41]

The verse states the Almighty made curse follow them eternally in the very world wherein they arrogantly led other people astray. In the Hereafter too, they will be humiliated. The words used in Sūrah Hūd are:

فَاتَّبَعُوْٓا اَمْرَ فِرْعَوْنَ ۚ وَمَآ اَمْرُ فِرْعَوْنَ بِرَشِيْدٍ. يَقْدُمُ قَوْمَهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فَاَوْرَدَهُمُ النَّارَ ۭ وَبِئْسَ الْوِرْدُ الْمَوْرُوْدُ. وَاُتْبِعُوْا فِيْ هٰذِهٖ لَعْنَةً وَّيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۭ بِئْسَ الرِّفْدُ الْمَرْفُوْدُ. (١١: ٩٧-٩٩)

So, they followed the opinion of the Pharaoh and the opinion of the Pharaoh was not correct. On the Day of Judgement, he will be in front of his nation and will land them into the Fire and how evil is this place of landing. And in this world also a curse has been made to follow them and on the Day of Judgement too. And what evil will be this reward that they will get. (11:97-98)

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَآ اَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُوْنَ الْاُوْلٰى بَصَاۗىِٕرَ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾[42]

Once the fate of the wrongdoers was depicted in the previous verses, this verse

40. And in this world We made them leaders who call towards Hell and on the Day of Judgement, they will not be helped.

41. And in this world We put a curse on them and on the Day of Judgement, they will be the ones ruined.

42. And after destroying the earlier nations, We gave the Book to Moses as one that gives insights to people and as a guide and mercy that they may be reminded.

mentions the blessings and reward of God on the oppressed, which has been referred to in the beginning of the anecdote in verse 5. It said that, after killing the previous nations, God gave the Book to Moses. The attributes of this book was that it was an insight, guidance and mercy for the people. It was an insight for the people because it engendered various abilities in the mind and the heart and also the capability to reflect and deliberate. The purpose was to explain that it consisted of such verses and arguments which would open the eyes. The expression هُدًى وَّ رَحۡمَةً has been explained earlier that when these two words occur together, they connote guidance (هُدًى) in the beginning (referring to this worldly life) and connote mercy (رَحۡمَةً) in the end (referring to the next-worldly life).

It may be noted that if a nation is given the book of God and His *sharī'ah*, then it is tantamount to be given the political and religious leadership of this world. However, this is conditional to giving due value to this gift of God's book. The Israelites were the first to receive this gift. It is evident from the words بَعۡدِ مَاۤ اَهۡلَكۡنَا الۡقُرُوۡنَ الۡاُوۡلٰى that in the shape of a formal book, this greatest gift of God was given foremost to the Israelites by Moses (sws). However, they treated this Book in a very contemptuous manner, the details of which have been mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

وَمَا كُنۡتَ بِجَانِبِ الۡغَرۡبِىِّ اِذۡ قَضَيۡنَاۤ اِلٰى مُوۡسَى الۡاَمۡرَ وَمَا كُنۡتَ مِنَ الشّٰهِدِيۡنَ ﴿۴۴﴾[43]

At the end of this anecdote the last two verses are addressed to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws). They validate his prophet hood and the address is actually directed to the Jews and to the Quraysh. It is stated that at the time Moses (sws) was given the book, he was neither present on the western side of the mount of Ṭūr when the Almighty had informed Moses (sws) after taking a decision, nor was he present with those, who at that time stood waiting for the Torah at the base of the mountain.

The expression بِجَانِبِ الۡغَرۡبِىِّ means بِجَانِبِ الطُّوۡرِ الۡغَرۡبِىِّ.

In the expression قَضَيۡنَاۤ اِلٰى مُوۡسَى الۡاَمۡرَ the word قَضَيۡنَاۤ encompasses the meaning of عَهِدۡنَا. A similar usage is found in عَهِدۡنَاۤ اِلٰۤى اِبۡرٰهٖمَ (۲:۱۲۵).

The word الشّٰهِدِيۡنَ in وَمَا كُنۡتَ مِنَ الشّٰهِدِيۡنَ alludes to the nation of Moses (sws). This is a reference to the time when Moses (sws) had left his people at the base of the mountain and in accordance with the divine directive had gone alone to receive the Torah. During this time, his nation waited for his return and it is at this juncture that the incident of Sāmirī took place. Details of all these incidents are found in earlier *sūrahs*.

The purpose of mentioning all this is that at the time when the Torah was given to Moses (sws), the Prophet (sws) was neither present with Moses (sws) nor with his nation, so how could he have known this anecdote with these details in all their correctness? This was a clear evidence of the fact that God had informed him about

43. And you were neither present on the western side of the mountain when We informed Moses of Our decision and nor were you among those people who were present there.

this anecdote through divine revelation and that he was God's messenger.

It may be kept in mind that the detail and accuracy with which the anecdote of Moses (sws) is mentioned in the Qur'ān is not found as such in the Torah. If one compares even that part of the anecdote mentioned in this very *sūrah* with how it is described in the Torah, one may come to realise that the description of the Torah is totally incoherent and interpolated, and is also devoid of the essential components which form the essence of the anecdote. The question is that how did the Prophet (sws) come to know of all these facts with such accuracy and precision. If obduracy compels someone to say that the source of the Prophet (sws) in this regard were some People of the Book of his times, then this is self-evidently wrong. If a person cites anecdotes and events on the basis of hearsay and narrates them, then they have to be in accordance with their general narration and not totally against it. And he narrates them in such a manner that every fair minded person cries out that the true version of the incident is the one which the Qur'ān has described and not the one which is related in the Torah. But for fear of a lack of space, I would have compared the two accounts and shown that the real components of the anecdote in the Torah are either missing or distorted. On the other hand, the Qur'ān has presented the essential components in such a logical and coherent way that their wisdom sinks into the hearts of its own accord.

وَلٰكِنَّآ اَنْشَاْنَا قُرُوْنًا فَتَطَاوَلَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ ۚ وَمَا كُنْتَ ثَاوِيًا فِيْٓ اَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ تَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِنَا ۙ وَلٰكِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِيْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ [44]

The initial part of this verse is related to the previous one. The sense of the discourse would be: You were not aware of these events; but We made you aware of them; and this We did because We produced many generations after Moses; a great time lapsed and people forgot this book of Ours which was sent as guidance and mercy; hence, it was essential that We revive this guidance through you.

Here, words to the effect فَنَسُوْا الذِّكْرَ (they forgot these events) are suppressed after: فَتَطَاوَلَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ.

The words وَمَا كُنْتَ ثَاوِيًا فِيْٓ اَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ imply that, just as the Prophet (sws) was not present on the western side of the mount Ṭūr when Moses (sws) was being given the Torah, in a similar way, he was not present in Madyan that he may have known the details of what happened during the time Moses (sws) spent there and what happened to the call of Shu'ayb (sws) and the fate of his nation. The Prophet (sws) was not aware of any of these details, but God made him aware of them. God's purpose was to make him His messenger, the way He made some others His messengers earlier on. The style found

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44. But We raised up many nations; then a period of time passed on them [and they forgot Our reminder; so, We sent you as a messenger to remind them] and you were also not stationed among the people of Madyan when We were reciting Our revelations but We were to send you as a messenger [so We informed you of those events].

in the words كُنَّا مُرْسِلِيْنَ is the same as one in كُنَّا فَاعِلِيْنَ (۲۱:۱۷). This style expresses a certain decision and a strong will. The addition of تَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِنَا after اَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ alludes to the anecdote of Shu'ayb (sws) which has been mentioned in many *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān. The implication is that he was not deputed to warn and deliver glad tidings to the people of that area but God made him aware of its circumstances. This is a very clear proof of the fact that God intended to assign the same task to him as He assigned to messengers before him. Unfortunate are the people who do not understand this.

وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الطُّوْرِ اِذْ نَادَيْنَا وَلٰكِنْ رَّحْمَةً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّآ اَتٰىهُمْ مِّنْ نَّذِيْرٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۴۶﴾[45]

The verse states that, just as the Prophet (sws) was not present at Madyan, he was similarly not present at the side of the mount Ṭūr, when God had called out to Moses (sws). This is a reference to the call mentioned in verse 30 earlier. The implication is that he had no knowledge of all these events but God's mercy intended to make him a messenger. For this reason, all these events were brought to his knowledge. These are very clear proofs of his prophet hood. Before the word رَّحْمَةً a verb to the effect أَرْسَلْنَاكَ is suppressed.

This is a reference to the purpose of sending Muḥammad (sws): God has made all this arrangement to warn people to whom no warner had come earlier, so that that they be reminded. This is a reference to the Ishmaelites. They were not conversant with the book of God and His *sharī'ah*. No messenger had come to them before Muḥammad (sws). In accordance with the prayer of Abraham (sws) the details of which can be seen in the earlier *sūrahs*, the Almighty sent him to them for their guidance. He was someone who belonged to them.

The implication is that this was a great mercy that they had encountered if they duly valued it. Concealed in this is also the fact that if they did not value it duly, then it could also become a great calamity for them. The established practice of God is that if a nation did not mend its ways after it was warned by a warner sent by Him, it was destroyed.

Section II: Verses (47-61)

It is evident from the above verses which are addressed to the Prophet (sws) that just as the Almighty sent Moses (sws) to the Pharaoh and his people as a messenger, in a similar way, He sent Muḥammad (sws) to the Quraysh as His messenger. His messenger hood was a great boon if they gave regard to it. It could also prove to be a

45. And you were also not present aside Ṭūr when We called Moses but you [were sent] by the grace of your Lord [that] you may warn a nation to which no warner came before you so that they may be reminded.

great bane if they did not value it. In the coming verses, this subject is further emphasised: it is said that the purpose of sending this messenger was to communicate the truth conclusively to them. If they were now afflicted by some torment, they could say that the Almighty has not forewarned them. However, such was the situation of these people that they raised an objection taught to them by the Jews on God's messenger – the objection that why was he not given the kind of miracles given to Moses (sws). The Prophet (sws) is told to ask them as to when did the people of Moses (sws) regard these miracles with seriousness so that it could be expected of them to take them seriously? Mentioned then is praise for those People of the Book who supported the Qur'ān in deference to the prophecies mentioned in their scriptures and who were patiently combating the uproar raised by their people. Moreover, a fear of the Quraysh had been allayed: they thought that if they accepted the message of the Qur'ān, they would be uprooted from the land. They are reassured that if they accepted this message, there would be no danger for them. However, if they rejected it, then they shall certainly be destroyed in accordance with the established practice of God. Readers may proceed to study the verses in this background.

Text and Translation

وَلَوْلَآ اَنْ تُصِيْبَهُمْ مُّصِيْبَةٌۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ فَيَقُوْلُوْا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَآ اَرْسَلْتَ اِلَيْنَا رَسُوْلًا فَنَتَّبِعَ اٰيٰتِكَ
وَنَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوْا لَوْلَآ اُوْتِيَ مِثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِيَ مُوْسٰى ؕ اَوَلَمْ
يَكْفُرُوْا بِمَآ اُوْتِيَ مُوْسٰى مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ قَالُوْا سِحْرٰنِ تَظٰهَرَا ۫ وَقَالُوْٓا اِنَّا بِكُلٍّ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ قُلْ فَاْتُوْا بِكِتٰبٍ مِّنْ
عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ هُوَ اَهْدٰى مِنْهُمَآ اَتَّبِعْهُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَاِنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لَكَ فَاعْلَمْ اَنَّمَا يَتَّبِعُوْنَ
اَهْوَآءَهُمْ ؕ وَمَنْ اَضَلُّ مِمَّنِ اتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ بِغَيْرِ هُدًى مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ
وَصَّلْنَا لَهُمُ الْقَوْلَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ هُمْ بِهٖ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَ اِذَا
يُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِهٖٓ اِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ مُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ اَجْرَهُمْ
مَّرَّتَيْنِ بِمَا صَبَرُوْا وَيَدْرَءُوْنَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ وَ مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَاِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ اَعْرَضُوْا
عَنْهُ وَ قَالُوْا لَنَآ اَعْمَالُنَا وَ لَكُمْ اَعْمَالُكُمْ ۫ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ۫ لَا نَبْتَغِي الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ اِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِيْ مَنْ
اَحْبَبْتَ وَ لٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ وَ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَ قَالُوْٓا اِنْ نَّتَّبِعِ الْهُدٰى مَعَكَ
نُتَخَطَّفْ مِنْ اَرْضِنَا ؕ اَوَلَمْ نُمَكِّنْ لَّهُمْ حَرَمًا اٰمِنًا يُّجْبٰٓى اِلَيْهِ ثَمَرٰتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رِّزْقًا مِّنْ لَّدُنَّا وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ

لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَكَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍۭ بَطِرَتْ مَعِيْشَتَهَا ۚ فَتِلْكَ مَسٰكِنُهُمْ لَمْ تُسْكَنْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ؕ وَكُنَّا نَحْنُ الْوٰرِثِيْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرٰى حَتّٰى يَبْعَثَ فِيْٓ اُمِّهَا رَسُوْلًا يَّتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِنَا ۚ وَمَا كُنَّا مُهْلِكِى الْقُرٰٓى اِلَّا وَاَهْلُهَا ظٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَمَآ اُوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنْ شَىْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَ زِيْنَتُهَا ۚ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ وَّ اَبْقٰى ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ اَفَمَنْ وَّعَدْنٰهُ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ لَاقِيْهِ كَمَنْ مَّتَّعْنٰهُ مَتَاعَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ هُوَ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِيْنَ ﴿٦١﴾

[And We would not have sent messengers] would they not, when stricken by a calamity because of their deeds, say: "Our Lord! Why did you not send a messenger to us so that we would have followed Your revelations and become among the believers." So, when the truth came to them from Us, they said: "Why was he not given the like of what was given to Moses?" Have such people not denied what was given to Moses earlier? They said: "Both are accomplished magicians who have teamed up with one another," and said "We deny all of them." (47-48)

Tell them: "If you deny it, bring another Book from God which provides better guidance than both of them. I will follow it, if you are truthful." If they do not accept this challenge of yours, be convinced that they are followers of their own desires only. And who can be more in error than those who follow their own desire without any guidance from God. God will never guide the unjust. (49-50)

And We provided them with successive books that they may be reminded. And those whom We earlier bestowed the Book, believe in it. And when it is recited out to them, they say: "We believe in it. It is indeed a truth from our Lord. We are its believers even before its arrival." It is these people who will receive a double reward because they persevered and retaliate vice with virtue and spend from the sustenance We have given them. And when they listen to nonsensical talk, they pay no heed to it and say: "To us our deeds and to you, yours. Thus accept our salutation. We do not like to get entangled with the ignorant." (51-55)

You cannot guide whomsoever you want to. In fact, it is God Who guides whomsoever He wants to and He alone fully knows the guided. (56)

And they say: "If we become followers of this guidance with you, we will be driven from our country." Did We not firmly plant them in a safe sanctuary towards which the produce of everything is being drawn to? But most of them do not know this. (57)

And how many a nation have shown ingratitude to their means of living whom We have destroyed. Thus, these are their settlements which were not inhabited after them but a little, and We alone were their heirs. And your Lord is not One Who destroys cities unless He sends a messenger to their central city who recites Our revelations

before them. And We do not destroy cities unless its inhabitants become unjust to their own selves. (58-59)

And whatever things you have been given are only resources of this world and its finery. And whatever is with God is better and lasting also. So, do you not understand? He with whom We have made a goodly promise; thus he will certainly receive what is promised will become like him who We bestowed with worldly resources, then he will be of those who are going to be summoned on the Day of Judgement. (60-61)

Explanation

وَلَوْلَآ اَنْ تُصِيْبَهُمْ مُّصِيْبَةٌۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ فَيَقُوْلُوْا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَآ اَرْسَلْتَ اِلَيْنَا رَسُوْلًا فَنَتَّبِعَ اٰيٰتِكَ وَنَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾[46]

In the presence of concomitant indications, the answer to the conditional clause لَوْلَآ can be suppressed. Same is the case here. It has been revealed in the translation.

This is an expression of God's favour on the Quraysh or, in other words, on the Ishmaelites. It is also a warning to them at the same time. The implication is that without even sending a messenger, God could have seized them because of their misdeeds. However, God did not do this lest they present the excuse that no messenger had come to them and as a result, they would have professed faith in God's revelations and in His messenger. In order to not afford them with this excuse and to convey the truth to them conclusively, the Almighty sent a messenger to them. If they did not duly value this favour, they should remember that were not left with any excuse to deny the truth.

It is evident from this that the light of intellect and innate guidance found in human nature is sufficient to guide him and secure him from evil deeds. Had God punished people for their misdeeds merely on the basis of not following this innate guidance, this would not have been against justice. However, as a means of further conclusive communication to the truth, He sent messengers so that no one would be left with any excuse after them. For this reason, it has remained an established practice of God that every nation that denied its respective messenger was destroyed from the face of the earth.

فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوْا لَوْلَآ اُوْتِيَ مِثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِيَ مُوْسٰى ؕ اَوَلَمْ يَكْفُرُوْا بِمَآ اُوْتِيَ مُوْسٰى مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ قَالُوْا

46. [And We would not have sent messengers] would they not, when stricken by a calamity because of their deeds, say: "Our Lord! Why did you not send a messenger to us so that we would have followed Your revelations and become among the believers."

سِحْرٰنِ تَظٰهَرَا ۖ وَقَالُوْٓا اِنَّا بِكُلٍّ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾[47]

The word اَلْحَقُّ (the truth) here connotes both the Book and the Messenger of God because, in essence, both are the same. The words مِنْ عِنْدِنَا refer to the exaltedness of this truth: it has come from God. So, whatever is against it is evil and is destined to perish.

It is stated that God revealed the truth in a conclusive way to dispel doubts and to not leave any person with any excuse to deny it, but these people were arguing why was not Muḥammad (sws) given the same miracles as were given to Moses (sws).

Concomitant indications show that this objection was spread by the Quraysh, but it was planted in their minds by the Jews. It will become evident from succeeding verses that, in those times, Jews had started to make evil schemes to incite the Quraysh against the Prophet (sws). This objection, too, originated from them. They told the Quraysh that this person claimed to be God's messenger but this was not how messengers were sent by God. They informed them that their messenger was given certain miracles by God; so why was this messenger not given miracles too. As simpletons, Quraysh could not understand this scheme of the Jews and began to raise this objection as well. Here, the Qur'ān has answered them by saying that did their brethren not deny the miracles which were given to Moses (sws)? Here, the verb has been ascribed because of inner similarity (اَوَ لَمْ يَكْفُرُوْا بِمَآ اُوْتِيَ مُوْسٰى مِنْ قَبْلُ). Verbs and pronouns are very commonly used in Arabic in this way. Examples can be seen in earlier *sūrahs*. In other words, when their hearts had arrogance in the same way that the people of the Pharaoh had, their deeds were the same as well. In order to gauge the eloquence of this scenario, what is alluded to earlier may be kept in mind: it were the Jews who had taught this objection.

The word سِحْر in قَالُوْا سِحْرٰنِ تَظٰهَرَا means سَاحِر. Yet an element of exaggeration is incorporated in the sentence. It is similar to زيد عدل (Zayd is justice). The word تَظٰهَرَا means mutual co-operation and connivance. Instead of professing faith in Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) as a result of the various miracles shown by them, the people of the Pharaoh alleged that both of them were expert magicians who have united against them. Their words وَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا بِكُلٍّ كٰفِرُوْنَ imply that however much these two forcefully presented their miracles, they would not profess faith in them. They would reject them as well as their miracles.

قُلْ فَاْتُوْا بِكِتٰبٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ هُوَ اَهْدٰى مِنْهُمَآ اَتَّبِعْهُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾[48]

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47. So, when the truth came to them from Us, they said: "Why was he not given the like of what was given to Moses?" Have such people not denied what was given to Moses earlier? They said: "Both are accomplished magicians who have teamed up with one another," and said "We deny all of them."

The verse implies that merely in their frenzy to oppose, they give reference to the miracles worked by Moses (sws), yet this was merely an excuse to raise an objection on the Prophet (sws). If they were truthful in what they claimed, why did they not profess faith in Moses (sws)? He should tell them that if there was any other book besides the Qur'ān and the Torah that will guide better than these books, then they should bring it and that the Prophet (sws) was ready to follow it.

The implication is that the quest for guidance is the requirement of the nature of every upright person. A person who does not have this quest is devoid of the basic traits of a human being. The Prophet (sws) should tell them that, in accordance with this very requirement of human nature, he believed in the Torah and in the Qur'ān, which provides even more guidance and if they were able to present a book that could guide him even more than these two, he was ready to follow it as well. Yet strange was their case: they neither believed in the Torah nor in the Qur'ān. It was only to argue with him that they were propagating this objection about him not showing miracles the way Moses (sws) did. The words اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ صٰدِقِيۡنَ imply that the enthusiasm they were showing to support Moses (sws) was merely to escape guidance. Otherwise what does it mean that they neither followed Moses (sws) nor Muḥammad, yet raised the objection that the latter does not show the same miracles as the former.

It should be kept in mind that the Qur'ān does not refute the Torah: it attests to it. Its refutation is confined to the interpolations found in it. The Qur'ān does not claim that it is the only scripture that provides guidance; its claim is that it provides more and sounder guidance (أَهۡدٰى وَ أَقۡوَمُ) than the Torah. One of the reasons for this is that it has presented God's guidance, firstly by cleansing it of all interpolations and secondly, it is the latest and most complete guidance from God about which the Torah itself had prophesied.

فَاِنۡ لَّمۡ يَسۡتَجِيۡبُوۡا لَكَ فَاعۡلَمۡ اَنَّمَا يَتَّبِعُوۡنَ اَهۡوَآءَهُمۡ ؕ وَمَنۡ اَضَلُّ مِمَّنِ اتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ بِغَيۡرِ هُدًى مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهۡدِى الۡقَوۡمَ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ﴿۵۰﴾[49]

The implication is that if these people do not present a book that gives more guidance than the Torah and the Qur'ān and are also not willing to follow either of these two, then this clearly shows that they want to follow their own desires. So who could be farther from guidance than those who want to follow their own whims leaving aside God's guidance? The desires of one's souls only want themselves to be fulfilled; they

48. Tell them: "If you deny it, bring another Book from God which provides better guidance than both of them. I will follow it, if you are truthful."

49. If they do not accept this challenge of yours, be convinced that they are followers of their own desires only. And who can be more in error than those who follow their own desire without any guidance from God. God will never guide the unjust.

do not have the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil and at times they are so forceful that they easily dominate a person's intellect. For this reason, the way to success for a person is to follow these desires in the light of God's guidance. If he starts following them without this light, he will definitely be doomed.

The words اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ imply that it is to save people from this destruction that can result from following desires, that God has revealed His guidance. Thus, unfortunate are those who do not duly value this guidance and consign their reins to these blind and deaf desires. Such people are ones who are unjust to their souls and – as a result of God's established practice about providing guidance – are deprived of guidance.

وَلَقَدْ وَصَّلْنَا لَهُمُ الْقَوْلَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۵۱﴾[50]

The implication is that it is for guiding people that God has made this elaborate arrangement to never cease the continuity of providing guidance. It has always remained in force. When the bearers of the Torah brought by Moses (sws) became indifferent to it, the Almighty blessed Muhammad (sws) with His guidance. This is actually a re-statement of the topic discussed earlier in verses 45 and 46. The implication is that this Qur'ān is not something strange and alien. It is something very familiar. Hence, it is the People of the Book who should take lead in accepting it, because the favour that was given to them in its incomplete form is now being given to them in its complete form. Then it is the good fortune of the Ishmaelites too, to graciously embrace it because now God has directly blessed them with this favour. Till then, neither any messenger was sent to them nor was any book revealed to them.

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ هُمْ بِهٖ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۵۲﴾ وَاِذَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِهٖٓ اِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ مُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿۵۳﴾[51]

The expression اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ refers to the righteous among the People of the Book. It has been explained at an appropriate instance of this exegesis that when a verb is used for them in this manner in its active voice, it refers to the pious among them. Moreover, the attitude they have adopted about the Qur'ān as indicated in this verse also points to this.

This verse actually points to a testimony of the veracity of the Qur'ān: if some miscreants were showing aversion to the Qur'ān, then they should be ignored. This is because there were also the righteous People of the Book who were duly valuing the

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50. And We provided them with successive books that they may be reminded.

51. And those whom We earlier bestowed the Book, believe in it. And when it is recited out to them, they say: "We believe in it. It is indeed a truth from our Lord. We are its believers even before its arrival."

Qur'ān and taking initiative in professing faith in it. Such was their state that when this Book was recited out to them, they cried out that it was indeed from their Lord and that they believed in it from before.

The emphasis and specific tone found in اِنَّهُ الۡحَقُّ مِنۡ رَّبِّنَاۤ shows that these people from the depth of their hearts attested to the contents of the previous scriptures mentioned by the Qur'ān –contrary to the miscreants of their nation. At the same time, they guided the leaders of the Quraysh that the Qur'ān was athe truth and was from God; hence, they must duly honour it and should not call for their doom by opposing it.

The words اِنَّا كُنَّا مِنۡ قَبۡلِهٖ مُسۡلِمِيۡنَ of these People of the Book point to the fact that they believed in the Qur'ān even before its revelation because of the prophecies found about it in their own scriptures. Verses 146 of Sūrah al-Baqarah and 114 of Sūrah al-An'ām also discuss this subject. Readers may look them up. It is evident from the word مُسۡلِمِيۡنَ that they were already waiting to consign themselves to this Messenger and this Book; thus when they encountered both of them, they submitted to them.

اُولٰٓئِكَ يُؤۡتَوۡنَ اَجۡرَهُمۡ مَّرَّتَيۡنِ بِمَا صَبَرُوۡا وَيَدۡرَءُوۡنَ بِالۡحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقۡنٰهُمۡ يُنۡفِقُوۡنَ ﴿۵۴﴾[52]

The verse states that these people will get a two-fold reward because of their perseverance. They will first be rewarded for diligently adhering to the religion they received from Moses (sws) in spite of the general waywardness of their nation. They will then be rewarded for continuing to eagerly await the final prophet and the perfect religion which was prophesied by Moses (sws), Jesus (sws) and other prophets. And when it came to them, they greeted it with gladness. There is a special reason for referring to their trait بِمَا صَبَرُوۡا (because of being steadfast). This must be kept in mind: these people had to bear a lot of traumatic calamities to continue to adhere to their previous religion and when they accepted Islam, they had to face the opposition of both their own nation and of the Quraysh. Yet, they faced these oppositions with perseverance. From among the Nazarenes, the hardships born by the followers of Simon at the hands of their self-styled innovators of their nation can be read in books of history. We have also referred to them at various places in this exegesis. It is these truthful people who were fortunate enough to accept the call of the Qur'ān and the Qur'ān has praised their love for the truth and their steadfastness in many of its *sūrahs*.

In the expression وَ يَدۡرَءُوۡنَ بِالۡحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ the word حَسَنَةٌ means steadfastness and forgiveness and سَيِّئَةٌ refers to the objections and allegations as well as the abuses and insults of the opposing group. When these people accepted Islam, their people regarded them to be the enemies of their ancestral religion and traitors of their nation

52. It is these people who will receive a double reward because they persevered and retaliate vice with virtue and spend from the sustenance We have given them.

and other enemies of the truth also made them a target of their curses and insults. However, these people responded to their unbecoming statements with true decency and forgiveness.

The words وَ مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ also have a special background. At several instances has the Qur'ān alluded to the fact that the greatest impediment for the People of the Book, in particular the Jews, to accept Islam was their lust for wealth. This *sūrah* mentions their Qārūn later and other *sūrahs* also mention their greed and desire for wealth. People who are inflicted with the lust for wealth never have the courage to accept the truth. Jesus (sws) is reported to have said: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God," (Matthew, 19:24). It is evident from Sūrah al-Lahab that the greatest motive of Abū Lahab's enmity for Islam was his greed and lust for wealth. Here, by referring to the trait of spending in charity of these righteous, the Qur'ān wants to explain that these people were never inflicted with the ailment of greed and avarice and hence were fortunate enough to accept Islam.

وَاِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ اَعْرَضُوْا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوْا لَنَآ اَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ اَعْمَالُكُمْ ۡ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ۡ لَا نَبْتَغِي الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ﴿۵۵﴾[53]

This verse further explains وَ يَدْرَءُوْنَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ. When these people hear the nonsensical talk of those who oppose them, they ignore them instead of getting entangled with them. The words قَالُوْا لَنَآ اَعْمَالُنَا وَ لَكُمْ اَعْمَالُكُمْ express the manner in which they ignore them: when their opponents engage in debate with them, they try to go their own way by saying that nothing much will come out of this debate; they are responsible for their deeds and their opponents for theirs. Let both choose the paths they want to tread.

The salutation سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ here implies parting ways. It is similar to what Abraham (sws) said to his father. It is a very polite way to disengage from someone. The words لَا نَبْتَغِي الْجٰهِلِيْنَ portray their attitude: while thinking that there is no benefit in engaging with the ignorant, they part ways after uttering salutations. This style of expression is found at a number of instances in the Qur'ān. At times, a person's attitude takes the place of his words.

اِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِيْ مَنْ اَحْبَبْتَ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ وَهُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿۵۶﴾[54]

The word ہدایت here means to rightly guide someone. This sentence is actually

53. And when they listen to nonsensical talk, they pay no heed to it and say: "To us our deeds and to you, yours. Thus accept our salutation. We do not like to get entangled with the ignorant."

54. You cannot guide whomsoever you want to. In fact, it is God Who guides whomsoever He wants to and He alone fully knows the guided.

meant to assure the Prophet (sws) that he should not fret and bother himself too much to guide them. His responsibility is to communicate the message to them. He does not have the authority or power to make them accept guidance. This is the Almighty's responsibility. He guides whomsoever He wills and He only knows who is worthy of being guided. The established practice of God about providing guidance to people has been explained at a number of places in this exegesis.

وَقَالُوْٓا اِنْ نَّتَّبِعِ الْهُدٰى مَعَكَ نُتَخَطَّفْ مِنْ اَرْضِنَا ؕ اَوَلَمْ نُمَكِّنْ لَّهُمْ حَرَمًا اٰمِنًا يُّجْبٰٓى اِلَيْهِ ثَمَرٰتُ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ رِّزْقًا مِّنْ لَّدُنَّا وَ لٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۵۷﴾[55]

This verse cites and then answers another objection raised by the Quraysh: they would say that if they accept Islam and become companions of the followers, this would mean that they will make the whole world around them their enemies and these enemies will unite to dislodge them from the land.

It may be noted that the Quraysh thought that it was because of their religion of polytheism that they have political authority in Arabia. They regarded their deities to be a source of their blessings. Moreover, in order to maintain their political dominance over all the Arab tribes they placed the idols of all these tribes in the House of God and in this way became their religious leaders. When the Prophet (sws) started to preach the message of monotheism, the Quraysh incited their nation against him by saying that if they worshipped only one God while leaving aside all their deities, then this would shatter their collective existence, all Arabia would turn and rise against them and they would be uprooted from this land. This is exactly the same objection as the one our leaders raise against the Islamic system, Islamic economics, Islamic social norms and Islamic punishments. They contend that if they adopt these, then this would mean that they will have to uproot all the existing systems relating to economics and to the society and earn the jeers of the whole world. It may be kept in mind that precisely the same objection was raised by the courtiers and leaders of the Pharaoh against the teachings of Moses (sws). They contended that this person is after destroying their grand culture (٦٣:٢٠) بِطَرِيقَتِكُمُ الْمُثْلَىٰ. This has remained the most effective weapon of miscreants in opposing the system envisioned by God.

The words اَوَلَمْ نُمَكِّنْ لَّهُمْ حَرَمًا اٰمِنًا يُّجْبٰٓى اِلَيْهِ ثَمَرٰتُ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ رِّزْقًا مِّنْ لَّدُنَّا answer their objection: these unaware people do not know that at the time when Abraham (sws) made his progeny inhabit this land, neither were the lives of people secure, nor did there exist any economic resources to live there. Yet Abraham (sws) did so and prayed for the sustenance and security of his progeny. It was a result of this prayer that today all

55. And they say: "If we become followers of this guidance with you, we will be driven from our country." Did We not firmly plant them in a safe sanctuary towards which the produce of everything is being drawn to? But most of them do not know this.

sorts of produce from various places are drawn towards it. The blessings and favours Makkah would reap in the *ḥajj* season and in the sacred months have already been mentioned in previous *surahs*. These words of the verse point to this aspect. The implication is that all these blessings that they enjoyed awere the result of God's grace and Abraham's prayer, but these wretched people thought that if they adopted the religion the Qur'ān was inviting them to and which was originally the religion of Abraham (sws), then they will be ruined.

The words وَ لٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ express sorrow on the attitude of these people: their majority is not aware of their own history.

In Sūrah al-'Ankabūt, this topic is brought up thus:

اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا اٰمِنًا وَّيُتَخَطَّفُ النَّاسُ مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ ؕ اَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَبِنِعْمَةِ اللّٰهِ يَكْفُرُوْنَ (٦٧:٢٩)

Have they not seen that We have made for them a protected sanctuary and such is the situation around them that people are abducted from their whereabouts. So, do they profess faith in belief in evil and are ungrateful to God's favours! (29:67)

A detailed discussion can be seen on the word ثَمَرٰتُ in Sūrah Baqarah:[56] it does not merely refer to fruits. Also included in its connotation is food-related produce of various kinds.

The construction نُمَكِّنْ لَّهُمْ حَرَمًا اٰمِنًا is similar to وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِيْنَهُمُ الَّذِى ارْتَضٰى لَهُمْ (٥٥:٢٤). This is a fact and history bears witness to it that the Almighty made His House a very safe and secure place. It is not dependent on others for its protection. In fact, it protects others. In Sūrah Quraysh, *insha'Allāh*, this aspect will be discussed in detail.

وَكَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍۭ بَطِرَتْ مَعِيْشَتَهَا ۚ فَتِلْكَ مَسٰكِنُهُمْ لَمْ تُسْكَنْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ؕ وَكُنَّا نَحْنُ الْوٰرِثِيْنَ ﴿۵۸﴾[57]

The verb بَطِرَ means "to show arrogance, pride and haughtiness." Since it is not commonly used as a transitive verb, a lot of differences of opinion exist regarding the accusative state of مَعِيْشَتَهَا. People generally think that there either occurs the suppression of a genitive particle (*ḥarf jar*) or that of a locus. The opinion of my mentor, Imām Farāhī, is that it is the object of the verb اَهْلَكْنَا. However, none of these opinions convince me. Some others regard بَطِرَتْ to encompass the meaning of كَفَرَتْ. This opinion seems acceptable. In Arabic, the phrase بَطِرَ الحَقّ is quite commonly used

56. See: Amin Ahsan Islahī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'an*, vol. 1, 381.

57. And how many a nation have shown ingratitude to their means of living whom We have destroyed. Thus, these are their settlements which were not inhabited after them but a little, and We alone were their heirs.

to connote تَكَبَّرَ عَنْهُ (he arrogantly ignored the truth). Similarly, if it is said: بَطِرَ فُلَانٌ النِّعْمَةَ, it would mean إِسْتَخَفَّهَا فَكَفَّرَهَا (he showed ingratitude to a favour by regarding it to be trivial). These usages, in my opinion, employ *taḍmīn* (a verb encompassing the meaning of another verb) and, in the verse under discussion, the verb بَطِرَ is used thus.

This verse actually admonishes the Quraysh. They thought that the peace and prosperity this land enjoyed was as a result of their planning and hence they were very proud of their strategy. The fact was that they had received it purely because of God's grace. The obligation they owed to this favour of God was by showing gratitude to Him, instead of showing arrogance. They must remember that many nations before them showed a similar attitude of arrogance on the favours they possessed. So God destroyed them because of this attitude and not far away from the Quraysh were the settlements of these nations. They passed by them regularly.

The word تِلْكَ shows that these settlements were known to the addressees. It refers to the areas in which nations like Thamūd and Lot (sws) lived. The trade routes of the Quraysh passed by them. What is discussed in لَمْ تُسْكَنْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا is the same that has been brought up in verse 100 of Sūrah Hūd: ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ الْقُرٰى نَقُصُّهٗ عَلَيْكَ مِنْهَا قَآئِمٌ وَّحَصِيْدٌ (This is an account of these settlements that We narrate to you. Some of them are intact and others do not exist). This verse has been explained at its respective place and readers may look it up. In my opinion, this meaning can be understood in the light of linguistic principles. This verse can also mean that these settlements lost all their majesty and grandeur while it may be that at times some shepherds and nomads may have inhabited them.

The words وَكُنَّا نَحْنُ الْوٰرِثِيْنَ refer to the fact that all those who regarded themselves to be the owners and rulers of these places and what they owned came into the ownership of God because it is He Who is the real owner of the heavens and the earth.

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرٰى حَتّٰى يَبْعَثَ فِيْٓ اُمِّهَا رَسُوْلًا يَّتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِنَا ۚ وَمَا كُنَّا مُهْلِكِى الْقُرٰٓى اِلَّا وَاَهْلُهَا ظٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿۵۹﴾[58]

The subject of warning and admonition continues with further clarity and intensity. The verse states that regarding decisive worldly punishment, the established practice of God is that He did not destroy a nation unless He sent a messenger to its main city who recited His revelations to them. The implication was that as far as the Quryash were concerned, the first phase of this established practice of God stood completed. God had sent His messenger to Makkah which was their main city. He was warning people by day and night through God's revelations. Now it was their attitude which would save them from His torment.

The words وَمَا كُنَّا مُهْلِكِى الْقُرٰٓى اِلَّا وَاَهْلُهَا ظٰلِمُوْنَ mention the second phase of this divine practice:

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58. And your Lord is not One Who destroys cities unless He sends a messenger to their central city who recites Our revelations before them. And We do not destroy cities unless its inhabitants become unjust to their own selves.

God did not destroy a city unless its inhabitants become unjust to their own selves. This means that in spite of all the warning and admonition sounded by God's messenger, people were still adamant on polytheism and rejected the messenger. The implication is that the Quraysh and their supporters will now encounter this last phase. If they did not duly value the messenger and remained adamant on their ways, they will definitely face the established practice of God after being given some respite. And this will not be an act of injustice by God. It will be an injustice they meted out to themselves.

وَمَآ أُوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَزِيْنَتُهَا ۚ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ وَّأَبْقٰى ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾[59]

The previous warnings were indirect. This verse directly addresses the leaders of the Quraysh. They are told that the life of luxury they enjoyed should not make them arrogant. It was only a comfort for a few days and a transient pleasure. The real thing which was better and everlasting is with God. It will be given to those who seek the Hereafter and strive for it. So, they should not waste the treasures of this eternal life by being lured by these temporary means and transient joys. They should use their intellect. Do they not understand this fact (أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ).

أَفَمَنْ وَّعَدْنٰهُ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ لَاقِيْهِ كَمَنْ مَّتَّعْنٰهُ مَتَاعَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ هُوَ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِيْنَ ﴿٦١﴾[60]

The word إحضار means to bring someone tied up as a criminal and for this reason the meaning of bringing forth someone with humiliation is incorporated in the word مُحْضَرِيْنَ.

The implication of the verse is that people should bear in mind that, on the one hand were those with whom God had promised an everlasting kingdom and they were bound to receive it – and hence whose promise can be more truthful than God – and on the other hand were those whom God had blessed with some temporary pleasures of a transient life, but ultimately, on the Day of Judgement they will be dragged with disgrace to the presence of God. So they should speak up whose fate was better and lasting.

Section III: Verses (62-75)

In the succeeding verses, a refutation of polytheism and idols is made. If anyone thought that in the Hereafter, his alleged associates and intercessors would be of

59. And whatever things you have been given are only resources of this world and its finery. And whatever is with God, is better and lasting also. So, do you not understand?

60. He with whom We have made a goodly promise; thus he will certainly receive what is promised will become like him who We bestowed with worldly resources, then he will be of those who are going to be summoned on the Day of Judgement.

benefit to him, he must get rid of this notion. Neither do these associates and intercessors have any role in administering this world, nor will they be of any avail in the Hereafter. Those who were denying the message of the Qur'ān on the basis of these baseless entities should think about their fate carefully.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ رَبَّنَا
هَٰؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَغْوَيْنَا ۚ أَغْوَيْنَاهُمْ كَمَا غَوَيْنَا ۖ تَبَرَّأْنَا إِلَيْكَ ۖ مَا كَانُوا إِيَّانَا يَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَقِيلَ ادْعُوا
شُرَكَاءَكُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمْ فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ وَرَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ ۚ لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ
فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أَجَبْتُمُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾ فَعَمِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَنْبَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَهُمْ لَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ فَأَمَّا مَنْ
تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَعَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُفْلِحِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيَخْتَارُ ۗ مَا كَانَ
لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ ۚ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَرَبُّكَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَهُوَ
اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ لَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْأُولَىٰ وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ
عَلَيْكُمُ اللَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِضِيَاءٍ ۖ أَفَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ
جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِلَيْلٍ تَسْكُنُونَ فِيهِ ۖ أَفَلَا
تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَمِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ
تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَنَزَعْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ
شَهِيدًا فَقُلْنَا هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ فَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ الْحَقَّ لِلَّهِ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

And bear in mind the day when God will call out, then ask: "Where are those partners of Mine you have been associating with Me?" Then those on whom the words of God would have been fulfilled will say: "Our Lord! These are the people whom We had led astray. We led them astray the way we ourselves had gone astray. We declare our acquittal from them in Your presence. They have not been worshipping Us." (62-63)

And they will be asked: "Now, call your associates." So, they will call out to them, but they will not respond to them and they will face the torment. Would that they had been among those who were guided! (64)

And bear in mind the day when God will call them and ask them: "What answer did you give to the messengers?" So, they will be speechless in dismay and they will not even be able to mutually ask one another. Yes! He who repented and professed faith and did righteous deeds, it is probable that he will succeed. (65-66)

And it is your Lord Who creates whatever He wants and chooses what He wants. They do not have any authority. God is pure and exalted from things which they associate with Him. And your Lord knows what they conceal in their hearts and what they reveal. And He is God. There is no deity except Him. He alone is worthy of gratitude in this world and in the Hereafter too. And judgement is in His Hands and to Him shall you be returned. (68-70)

Tell them: "Speak up, if God makes the night prevail on you forever till the Hereafter, then which deity except God can bring light to you? So, do you not listen?!" Say: "Speak up, if God makes the day prevail on you forever till the Hereafter, then which deity except God can bring the night to you in which you feel comfort? So, do you people not see!?" And out of His mercy has He created the night and day for you so that you may find comfort in it and that you may seek His bounty and that you may be grateful. (71-73)

And bear in mind that day when God will call out to them and say: "Where are My partners you regarded to be My associates." And We will pick out one witness from each community and tell people: "Bring forth your evidence." So, it will become evident to them that with God lies the truth. And whatever they had been falsely alleging will all disappear. (74-75)

Explanation

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ اَيْنَ شُرَكَآءِىَ الَّذِيْنَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُوْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾[61]

This verse and the subsequent ones are of the nature of successive warnings. They depict the fate of the polytheists, leaders who led people to polytheism and the entities who were regarded as deities. It states that people must not forget the day on which God will summon all the polytheists to His court of justice and ask them about the partners they associated with Him. The wrath concealed in اَيْنَ شُرَكَآءِىَ, not only for the polytheists but also the idols they worshipped can well be appreciated by those who have a flare for the language. The implication is that they should bring forth all of them so that they and their deities both can see their fate.

قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ رَبَّنَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ الَّذِيْنَ اَغْوَيْنَا ۚ اَغْوَيْنٰهُمْ كَمَا غَوَيْنَا ۚ تَبَرَّاْنَآ اِلَيْكَ ۖ مَا كَانُوْٓا اِيَّانَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾[62]

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61. And bear in mind the day when God will call out, then ask: "Where are those partners of Mine you have been associating with Me?"

62. Then those on whom the words of God would have been fulfilled will say: "Our Lord!

The words حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ refer to those leaders of the polytheists about whom the verdict of God's decisive punishment would have been passed. It is stated in this verse that as a last excuse, those who were led astray will point to their leaders before God as the ones who were responsible for they being led astray. They will say that, had these leaders not lured them, they would not have been misguided. The words اَغْوَيْنٰهُمْ كَمَا غَوَيْنَا will be immediately uttered by their leaders that they made these people into what they themselves were; it is these followers who must be blamed for following them. They will address God further and say: تَبَرَّاْنَآ اِلَيْكَ ie. in your presence, we acquit ourselves for their deeds and will go on to say: مَا كَانُوْٓا اِيَّانَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ i.e, they have not been worshipping us that we should be responsible for it; they have been following us out of their own will and choice. There are several instances in the Qur'ān where this argument between misguided leaders and their followers has been cited. Here is an example:

قَالَ ادْخُلُوْا فِيْٓ اُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَ الْاِنْسِ فِي النَّارِ ؕ كُلَّمَا دَخَلَتْ اُمَّةٌ لَّعَنَتْ اُخْتَهَا ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا ادَّارَكُوْا فِيْهَا جَمِيْعًا ۙ قَالَتْ اُخْرٰىهُمْ لِاُوْلٰىهُمْ رَبَّنَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اَضَلُّوْنَا فَاٰتِهِمْ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا مِّنَ النَّارِ ؕ قَالَ لِكُلٍّ ضِعْفٌ وَّ لٰكِنْ لَّا تَعْلَمُوْنَ وَ قَالَتْ اُوْلٰىهُمْ لِاُخْرٰىهُمْ فَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُوْنَ (۷: ۳۸-۳۹)

God will order: "Enter Hell with those groups from among the jinn and men who entered before you." Whenever a group will enter, it will curse its counterpart until when all are gathered, the later ones will say about the earlier ones: "Our Lord! These are the people who led us astray. Inflict double punishment on them." God will say: "For each of you is double punishment but you do not know." And the earlier ones will say to the later ones: "You also have no superiority on us. So, taste punishment because of your deeds." (7:38-39)

وَ قِيْلَ ادْعُوْا شُرَكَآءَكُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمْ فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لَهُمْ وَ رَاَوُا الْعَذَابَ ۚ لَوْ اَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿۶۴﴾ [63]

The followers will try to put the blame on their leaders. When the latter will openly declare their acquittal from them, they will be told that their leaders have disowned them. So they should bring forth their deities they worshipped. At that time, in great worry they will call out these deities like Lāt, Manāt, 'Uzzā and Nā'ilah, but they will not get any response to their calls because these deities never, in fact, existed. They

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These are the people whom We had led astray. We led them astray the way we ourselves had gone astray. We declare our acquittal from them in Your presence. They have not been worshipping Us."

63. And they will be asked: "Now, call your associates." So, they will call out to them, but they will not respond to them and they will face the torment. Would that they had been among those who were guided!

existed only in imagination. These people will come to know in the Hereafter that they had only worshipped conjecture. It may be kept in mind that here the idolaters of Arabia are mentioned – all of whose idols and deities were self-styled and imaginary. Nations that have worshipped actual beings – like the Christians who worship Jesus (sws) – are mentioned separately by the Qur'ān. About them it is said that on the Day of Judgement, Jesus (sws) will disown those who worshipped him and say that he was never aware that some foolish people worshipped him and that he had actually asked everyone to worship the One God.

The words وَرَاَوُا الْعَذَابَ allude to the fact that calling out to idols on which they had pinned their hopes will prove futile. However, the torment of God will be before them and they will face it.

The words لَوْ اَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا يَهْتَدُوْنَ express sorrow at their state of affairs: would that they had received guidance and not faced this torment. The profundity and horrible nature of the torment becomes evident from this.

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيْهِمْ فَيَقُوْلُ مَاذَآ اَجَبْتُمُ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ فَعَمِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْاَنْۢبَآءُ يَوْمَىِٕذٍ فَهُمْ لَا يَتَسَآءَلُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾[64]

These verses also portray the Day of Judgement. On that Day, every community will be called out and asked how they responded to their respective messenger. Obviously, this question would be posed to them to make evident to them the grave nature of their crime: God had made arrangements to guide them by sending His messengers so that the truth becomes evident to them from every aspect. So, they should now speak up and reply how much importance they had given to these arrangements made by God.

The expression فَعَمِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْاَنْۢبَآءُ means that at that time everyone will be so mystified and completely at a loss that they will have nothing substantive to say.

The words فَهُمْ لَا يَتَسَآءَلُوْنَ say that they will be so perplexed that they will not even be able to question one another to find an answer to the query posed to them. In such circumstances, it is the leaders who are the hope for all. However, their situation has already been described earlier: that they would be too involved in themselves and would not be in a position to think of others. This aspect is also discussed in verse 109 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah.

فَاَمَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَاٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَعَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُفْلِحِيْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾[65]

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64. And bear in mind the day when God will call them and ask them: "What answer did you give to the messengers?" So, they will be speechless in dismay and they will not even be able to mutually ask one another.

65. Yes! He who repented and professed faith and did righteous deeds, it is probable that he will succeed.

When the word عَسٰی is used with reference to God, the meanings of promise and glad tidings are incorporated in it, as is explained at an appropriate place in this exegesis.

After explaining the fate of those who lived and died as polytheists, this verse gives glad tidings to those who, after giving up the evil creeds of polytheism and intercession, adopt a life of faith and righteous deeds. It is stated that it can be hoped that these people will succeed. They should not be totally convinced that they shall succeed as success will purely be because of God's grace, but they have the right to hope since God is Gracious and Merciful.

وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ وَيَخْتَارُ ؕ مَا كَانَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ ؕ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾[66]

In this verse, the words مَا يَشَآءُ are suppressed after وَ يَخْتَارُ due to the obvious concomitant indication. This is a reference to the angels: it is God Who has created them as well and it is He Who has made them His near ones. He creates whatever He desires. In Sūrah al-Ḥajj, the words used are: اَللّٰهُ يَصْطَفِيْ مِنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَّ مِنَ النَّاسِ (٢٢:٧٥) (God selects his messengers from angels and from people also, (22:75)). In other words, the superiority held by the angels because of their physical form or because of being close to God is something which God has granted them. These traits do not make them worthy of being ascribed divinity. The words مَا كَانَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ say that they do not have any authority independent of God. It is further said that God is beyond and exalted above all such ascriptions (سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ وَ تَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ). If someone is made His associate in His authority and His attributes, then this will be akin to negating all His higher attributes. Here, it may be kept in mind that earlier in verse 64, according to the view of the idolaters of Arabia, all the deities mentioned belonged to the genre of angels. For this reason, the Qur'ān has clarified the real status of the angels: they may be a superior creation of God, but this superiority is God-given and not self-acquired.

وَرَبُّكَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُوْرُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾[67]

This verse refutes polytheism on the basis of God's profound wisdom: when the Prophet's Lord has full knowledge of their inner and outer selves, why would He need anyone to be His partner. This could have been a need had He been dependent on others to become aware of the circumstances of people. Also, any intercession to Him could have been a need only when someone else was in a position of adding to His knowledge because, God forbid, His knowledge is incomplete. When any such preposition cannot even be supposed, then what is the meaning of worshipping the angels because they are

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66. And it is your Lord Who creates whatever He wants and chooses what He wants. They do not have any authority. God is pure and exalted from things which they associate with Him.

67. And your Lord knows what they conceal in their hearts and what they reveal. And He is God.

thought to be a means of procuring the nearness of God for others?

وَهُوَ اللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ لَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْاُوْلٰى وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۫ وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾[68]

This verse sums up the previous discussion: He alone is the real God. There is no deity besides Him. All those who are regarded as deities are baseless. It may be kept in mind that the Arabs regarded God to be the supreme deity but at the same time ascribed partners to Him. This verse refutes this supposition.

The words لَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْاُوْلٰى وَالْاٰخِرَةِ say that the favours which people enjoy in this world are from God and in the Hereafter too, the favours they will be blessed with will be from God. For this reason, in this world also, it is God alone who is worthy of gratitude and in the Hereafter too. No one else will have any share in it. The words of praise which will be on the tongues of the People of Paradise once they are blessed with God's favours are referred to in Sūrah Yūnus.

The words وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ imply that only the Almighty will have the authority of deciding the affairs of each and every person and everyone will come to Him and none else.

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمُ الَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَنْ اِلٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ يَاْتِيْكُمْ بِضِيَآءٍ ؕ اَفَلَا تَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَرْمَدًا اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَنْ اِلٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ يَاْتِيْكُمْ بِلَيْلٍ تَسْكُنُوْنَ فِيْهِ ؕ اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾[69]

The word قُلْ here implies asking a question. When the question is of an obvious nature and there is no possibility for the addressees to differ in its answer, then this word becomes very apt with respect to conclusive communication of the truth. The idolaters of Arabia acknowledged that it is God alone Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Based on this affirmation of theirs, they are asked that if God makes the night prevail on them forever, is there anyone from their deities who can make light appear? Similarly, if God makes the day prevail over them forever, do their deities have the power to bring forth the night in which these people attain comfort from the tiredness of the day? The implication is that, when, their deities have no say in these elements of nature on which the life of the creatures of this universe depends, then what good are they for which they are regarded to be God's partners?

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68. There is no deity except Him. He alone is worthy of gratitude in this world and in the Hereafter too. And judgement is in His Hands and to Him shall you be returned.

69. Tell them: "Speak up, if God makes the night prevail on you forever till the Hereafter, then which deity except God can bring light to you? So, do you not listen?!" Say: "Speak up, if God makes the day prevail on you forever till the Hereafter, then which deity except God can bring the night to you in which you feel comfort? So, do you people not see!?"

Here, this style of the Qur'ān must be borne in mind that after the mention of the night the words used are اَفَلَا تَسۡمَعُوۡنَ (do you people not hear?) and after the mention of the day the words used are اَفَلَا تُبۡصِرُوۡنَ (do you people not see?). This style portrays the actual situation. It is as if the first question is being uttered in the night, implying that if they are not able to see, can't they not even hear? So, why do they not hear. Similarly, it is as if the second question is posed in the day: at this time, every thing is fully lit up and can they not see obvious facts in such light?

Another aspect of eloquence here is that what can be deduced has been made experiential. This means that such is the nature of these self-evident facts that not much contemplation is needed. It is sufficient that a person has ears and eyes. But such is their situation that, neither can they hear anything in the stillness of the night, nor can they see anything in the light of the day.

Another thing worthy of attention in these verses is that the attribute of تَسۡكُنُوۡنَ فِيۡهِ is mentioned with night but no attribute is mentioned with the day. The reason for this has been pointed out many times before in this exegesis: parallel clauses in the discourse are suppressed because of eloquence and brevity when they are understood to be present. Here, since the benefit of the day was absolutely evident, its mention was suppressed. In the succeeding verse, this suppression has been made evident.

وَمِنۡ رَّحۡمَتِهٖ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّيۡلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسۡكُنُوۡا فِيۡهِ وَلِتَبۡتَغُوۡا مِنۡ فَضۡلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمۡ تَشۡكُرُوۡنَ ﴿۷۳﴾[70]

This verse states that bringing the night and day is only because of God's grace and blessing. No one else has any authority in this regard. Furthermore, the Almighty owed no obligation to people to make the night a means of comfort for them and then make the day appear so that they are able to strive to obtain their sustenance in it. All this is nothing but a manifestation of God's mercy so that people are able to benefit from these blessings and remain thankful to God for making such an elaborate arrangement. The word لِتَسۡكُنُوۡا (that you seek comfort) is related to night and the words وَلِتَبۡتَغُوۡا مِنۡ فَضۡلِهٖ (so that you seek His bounty) to the day. The effort people make to earn their living is termed as "seeking God's bounty." This is because people's efforts, while using the means and resources created by God, should be in accordance with His wish. If a person does not do so, it is as if he uses the weapons God has given him against God Himself and in this way he invites His wrath.

وَيَوۡمَ يُنَادِيۡهِمۡ فَيَقُوۡلُ اَيۡنَ شُرَكَآءِىَ الَّذِيۡنَ كُنۡتُمۡ تَزۡعُمُوۡنَ ﴿۷۴﴾ وَنَزَعۡنَا مِنۡ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ شَهِيۡدًا فَقُلۡنَا هَاتُوۡا بُرۡهَانَكُمۡ

70. And out of His mercy has He created the night and day for you so that you may find comfort in it and that you may seek His bounty and that you may be grateful.

فَعَلِمُوْٓا اَنَّ الْحَقَّ لِلّٰهِ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾[71]

Verse 74 also occurs at the beginning of this section of verses. Here it has come as a prelude to another issue: the Almighty, in order to conclusively and finally communicate the truth to the idolaters on the Day of Judgement, will make messengers of each nation testify that they had taught them the belief of monotheism and not polytheism. After this testimony of the messengers, the Almighty will ask their respective nations as to on whose approval did they associate partners with God; if they have any proof of this, they should present it. At that time, it will become evident to everyone that God was on the truth and all their self-styled deities will prove to be of no worth.

The word شَهِيْدٌ refers to God's messengers who were sent to each nation. They are called by this word because they bore witness to God's religion before their respective nations, not only in this world, but in the Hereafter also they will testify that they faithfully delivered the religion of God. If the later generations incorporated religious innovations in it, it was the latter's responsibility and that they themselves are absolved of this. It needs to be kept in mind that in support of their polytheism and innovations every *ummah* gives reference to its prophets and messengers: that these beliefs are based on their teachings and that they are only following these teachings. The Almighty will conclusively deliver the truth to them through the evidence of these very messengers after which their followers will have nothing to say. This testimony of the messengers is mentioned in verses 16-17 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah. Readers may look it up for details.

My mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, interprets this verse in the light of verse 69 of Sūrah Maryam and verse 47 of Sūrah Ḥām Mīm al-Sajdah. However, I am not convinced of his interpretation. My own interpretation is the same as that of the other exegetes and clear parallel verses of the Qur'ān also support it. God knows best.

Section IV: Verses (76-84)

The succeeding topic is connected to verse 61. It had been mentioned earlier that many nations of the past which showed arrogance at their wealth and riches were destroyed by God and their deities who they were proud of could not save them. After this, the topic of polytheism was brought up in a secondary way that ended on verse 75. Next, the initial topic is taken up once again and, by presenting the haughtiness and

71. And bear in mind that day when God will call out to them and say: "Where are My partners you regarded to be My associates?" And We will pick out one witness from each community and tell people: "Bring forth your evidence." So, it will become evident to them that with God lies the truth. And whatever they had been falsely alleging will all disappear.

subsequent exemplary fate of Qārūn, a Jewish capitalist, admonition is sounded to people who were lured by the riches of this world and had forgotten God and the Hereafter. In the nation of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws), Abū Lahab had the same status as Qārūn. He, too, was very proud of his wealth and his wealth had become a trial not only for himself, but also for others. The purpose of citing this example was to open the eyes of such people.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

اِنَّ قَارُوْنَ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمِ مُوْسٰى فَبَغٰى عَلَيْهِمْ ۠ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوْزِ مَآ اِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهٗ لَتَنُوْٓاُ بِالْعُصْبَةِ اُولِى
الْقُوَّةِ ۗ اِذْ قَالَ لَهٗ قَوْمُهٗ لَا تَفْرَحْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِيْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَابْتَغِ فِيْمَآ اٰتٰىكَ اللّٰهُ الدَّارَ الْاٰخِرَةَ وَلَا
تَنْسَ نَصِيْبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَاَحْسِنْ كَمَآ اَحْسَنَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفَسَادَ فِى الْاَرْضِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ
الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾ قَالَ اِنَّمَآ اُوْتِيْتُهٗ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ عِنْدِىْ ۭ اَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ اَهْلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ مِنَ الْقُرُوْنِ
مَنْ هُوَ اَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَّاَكْثَرُ جَمْعًا ۭ وَلَا يُسْـَٔلُ عَنْ ذُنُوْبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَخَرَجَ عَلٰى قَوْمِهٖ فِىْ زِيْنَتِهٖ ۭ قَالَ
الَّذِيْنَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا يٰلَيْتَ لَنَا مِثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِيَ قَارُوْنُ ۙ اِنَّهٗ لَذُوْ حَظٍّ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ
اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيْلَكُمْ ثَوَابُ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنْ اٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ۚ وَلَا يُلَقّٰىهَآ اِلَّا الصّٰبِرُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ فَخَسَفْنَا بِهٖ وَ
بِدَارِهِ الْاَرْضَ ۠ فَمَا كَانَ لَهٗ مِنْ فِئَةٍ يَّنْصُرُوْنَهٗ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۡ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُنْتَصِرِيْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَاَصْبَحَ
الَّذِيْنَ تَمَنَّوْا مَكَانَهٗ بِالْاَمْسِ يَقُوْلُوْنَ وَيْكَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ وَيَقْدِرُ ۚ لَوْلَآ اَنْ مَّنَّ
اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا لَخَسَفَ بِنَا ۭ وَيْكَاَنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُرِيْدُوْنَ
عُلُوًّا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا ۭ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ مَنْ جَاۗءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهٗ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهَا ۚ وَمَنْ جَاۗءَ
بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى الَّذِيْنَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ اِلَّا مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾

Qārūn belonged to the nation of Moses. So, he showed tyranny against them. And We had given him so much treasures that its keys could barely be lifted by a strong group. When the people of His nation said to him: "Do not be arrogant. God does not like those who are arrogant. And whatever God has given you, seek the Hereafter in it and do not forget your share from the world. And the way God has been kind to you, you also be kind to others. And do not seek disorder in the land. God does not like those who want disorder." (76-77)

He replied: "Whatever I have is because of the knowledge I possess." Did he not

know that God destroyed many nations before him which were mightier than him in power and also greater in number and the criminals are not even asked for their crimes? (78)

Thus he came out with full splendour and majesty before the people of his nation. So, those who were after the life of the world, said: "Would that we, too, had what Qārūn has. Indeed, he is very fortunate." And those who were endowed with knowledge said: "O Wretched Ones! God's reward for those who have faith and do righteous deeds is far better," and this wisdom is given only to the patient. (79-80)

We made him sink in the earth with his dwelling. So, neither could a group come to his rescue against God, nor could he defend his own self. And those who yesterday desired his position declared: "Indeed! God gives abundantly to those among His servants He wills and sparingly to those He wills. Had God not been gracious to us, He would have thrust us in the earth as well. Undoubtedly, the disbelievers will never succeed." (81-82)

We shall reserve this abode of the Hereafter for only those who are not desirous of arrogance and disorder in the land and the ultimate success is for the God-fearing. He who earns a virtuous deed, for him is a better reward than it and he who earns an evil deed, then for such evil doers the recompense is equal to what they did. (83-84)

Explanation

اِنَّ قَارُوْنَ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمِ مُوْسٰى فَبَغٰى عَلَيْهِمْ ۠ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوْزِ مَآ اِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهٗ لَتَنُوْٓاُ بِالْعُصْبَةِ اُولِى الْقُوَّةِ ۗ اِذْ قَالَ لَهٗ قَوْمُهٗ لَا تَفْرَحْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِيْنَ ﴿۷۶﴾[72]

Qārūn has been mentioned in the Torah in chapter 19 of the Book of Numbers. He is called Korah in the Torah. It is evident from his genealogy that he belonged to the Levites – the tribe to which Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) belonged and was the son of his father's brother. He was very jealous of the political and religious leadership of Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws). Hence, he raised the slogan that if all members of a tribe were equally holy and religious, then what was so superior about Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) that they had become the leaders of the tribe and did others not have this right. So, he connived with some people of the family and rose in rebellion against Moses (sws). The Torah records:

> Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and certain Reubenites—Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and one son of Peleth—became insolent and

72. Qārūn belonged to the nation of Moses. So, he showed tyranny against them. And We had given him so much treasures that its keys could barely be lifted by a strong group. When the people of His nation said to him: "Do not be arrogant. God does not like those who are arrogant.

rose up against Moses. With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council. They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the LORD's assembly?" (Numbers, 19:1-3)

It is this rebellion of his which the Qur'ān has referred to here by the words فَبَغٰى عَلَيْهِمْ.

The words وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوْزِ مَآ اِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهٗ لَتَنُوْٓاُ بِالْعُصْبَةِ اُولِى الْقُوَّةِ refer to his state of affluence. They actually point to the reason that made him rebellious and arrogant: since he was a very rich person, he disliked accepting the superiority of Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) over his family and nation. These words imply that God had given him such treasure of wealth that the keys of the place they were locked up in would be lifted by a group of powerful men. This is not a statement of exaggeration; it is a factual one. In those times, today's strong rooms, vaults and safes did not exist, nor were propitious keys and locks and bolts in vogue the way they are today. In those times, people would burry their treasures in the ground and in order to protect them they would be placed in locations having huge iron doors. They would then be bolted with help of heavy iron rods that would be latched across the bars and which would be prepared for this very purpose. Latching and un-latching these rods with all their accessories would become a very heavy task. A group of powerful men would be needed to lift or bolt the latch. A very similar way is adopted today for bolting castles and city walls. Such old monuments still exist in our rural areas. The verse actually refers to such keys. Just as heavy cauldrons of food signify generosity, the existence of such keys is a sign of wealth.

The words اِذْ قَالَ لَهٗ قَوْمُهٗ لَا تَفْرَحْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِيْنَ imply that when Korah adopted this attitude of rebelliousness, the wise among his nation tried to persuade him that he should not show arrogance before the God Who has actually granted him this wealth and affluence and that he should remember that God does not like such haughty people. This was a polite admonition that was meant to tell him that people who adopt this behaviour are seized by the Almighty. Though the word **قوم** occurs as a common noun, concomitant indications show that it refers to learned men of the nation. Verse 80 has explained this. The reason that this general word is used is that the majority of the nation was with Moses (sws). There were a few who, because of their vested interests, had formed a group with Korah.

وَابْتَغِ فِيْمَآ اٰتٰىكَ اللّٰهُ الدَّارَ الْاٰخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيْبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَاَحْسِنْ كَمَآ اَحْسَنَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفَسَادَ فِى الْاَرْضِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿۷۷﴾[73]

73. And whatever God has given you, seek the Hereafter in it and do not forget your share from the world. And the way God has been kind to you, you also be kind to others. And do not

This is a further description of the advice that the learned men of the nation gave to Korah. Each and every sentence of it is a treasure of wisdom and sagacity.

The words وَابْتَغِ فِيْمَآ اٰتٰىكَ اللّٰهُ الدَّارَ الْاٰخِرَةَ imply that if God had blessed them with wealth and affluence, then it was not meant to make them arrogant and haughty but to make this wealth a means of attaining success in the Hereafter. The implication is that whatever riches they had were neither the legacy of their forefathers, nor the consequence of their own abilities. They were purely a blessing from God and by making them wealthy the Almighty had put them through a trial. Their test was whether they become slaves to it or made it a means of earning God's pleasure.

The words وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيْبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا are a sagacious admonition: they should remember that everything of this world is mortal. Nothing is eternal here. Only that will benefit them in their everlasting lives which today they spend for God's cause. If they shut their eyes to the rights of God and His creatures and become slaves to their wealth, they should remember that this will only hand them over to their ruin.

Our exegetes have generally interpreted these words to mean that they should not ignore their share in this world; it is not said that they should forsake this world for the Hereafter, but that they should not become oblivious of the Hereafter. In my opinion, this interpretation is totally incorrect and incorrect on the basis of many reasons. However, after explaining their true meaning, no need remains to refute this interpretation.

The words وَاَحْسِنْ كَمَآ اَحْسَنَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكَ imply that just as God has been gracious to them, they, too, should be gracious to others. God wants to see the reflection of His attributes in His creatures: they should bear in mind that the God Who is munificent with His people does not like people who are miserly with others.

The words وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفَسَادَ فِى الْاَرْضِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ explain the above sagacious advice from its negative aspect. The expression فَسَادَ فِى الْاَرْضِ (disorder in the land) has been explained at many instances in this exegesis. It does not merely connote theft and robbery, for these are only some of its external manifestations. The real disorder is arrogance and haughtiness. Arrogance means that a person exceeds the limits of his worship and intervenes in the rights and limits of God. Those who perpetrate this crime are guilty of spreading disorder in the land, however subtle they may be in this regard. God does not like such people. Obviously, how can He like such people who show tyranny before Him and violate the sanctity of what is regarded sacred by Him? And when He does not like them, then this clearly means that their status is that of unwanted weeds in His orchard and of self-invited guests in His banquet. Ultimately, a time will come when these weeds shall be uprooted and these undesirable people shall be dislodged from their places.

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seek disorder in the land. God does not like those who want disorder."

قَالَ اِنَّمَآ اُوْتِيْتُهٗ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ عِنْدِيْ ؕ اَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ اَهْلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ مِنَ الْقُرُوْنِ مَنْ هُوَ اَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَّ اَكْثَرُ جَمْعًا ؕ وَلَا يُسْـَٔلُ عَنْ ذُنُوْبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿۷۸﴾[74]

Qārūn replied that the wealth and riches he had were the result of his own efficient planning and the consequence of his own acumen; it did not have any link with God so he did not owe Him an obligation. The word عِنْدِيْ portrays Qārūn's mindset: the source of wealth was found within himself and not in God. It is for this reason he contended that he did not fear God or anyone one else. In other words, he implied that all this advice that he was receiving had no importance to him and it better be given to someone else.

The words اَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ اَهْلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ مِنَ الْقُرُوْنِ مَنْ هُوَ اَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَّ اَكْثَرُ جَمْعًا form a comment by God on Qārūn's reply: before making these bragging remarks, this wretched person did not think that many persons of the past were mightier than him, but God had destroyed them in the blink of an eye. It may be kept in mind that not very long before him, the Pharaoh had been drowned. So, even if he was not a witness to this incident, he must well have heard about it. The words اَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً here refer to the might of people viz a viz means and resources, majesty and grandeur, weapons and instruments and the word جَمْع in اَكْثَرُ جَمْعًا refers to the number of people in a family or tribe.

The words وَ لَا يُسْـَٔلُ عَنْ ذُنُوْبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ imply that when God decides to seize such criminals, then they are not given even this much respite that they be asked about their crime and about any pretext they may be having. In fact, God's torment seizes them immediately. On the Day of Judgement too, God will not need to investigate any wrongdoer. The forehead, hands, feet and his other limbs will bear witness against him. The words used in Sūrah al-Raḥmān are: يُعْرَفُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ بِسِيْمٰهُمْ فَيُؤْخَذُ بِالنَّوَاصِيْ وَ الْاَقْدَامِ (٤١:٥٥) (the wrongdoers will be recognised by their signs; thus they shall be seized by their forelocks and their feet, (55:41)).

فَخَرَجَ عَلٰى قَوْمِهٖ فِيْ زِيْنَتِهٖ ؕ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا يٰلَيْتَ لَنَا مِثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِيَ قَارُوْنُ ۙ اِنَّهٗ لَذُوْ حَظٍّ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿۷۹﴾[75]

It seems that during these events, Qārūn took out a procession to show off his strength and power in order to over-awe Moses (sws) and his companions and to increase his own power. It is evident from the words فِيْ زِيْنَتِهٖ that, at this instance, he specially made a show of his majesty and grandeur because it is such a display that

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74. He replied: "Whatever I have is because of the knowledge I possess." Did he not know that God destroyed many nations before him which were mightier than him in power and also greater in number and the criminals are not even asked for their crimes.

75. Thus he came out with full splendour and majesty before the people of his nation. So, those who were after the life of the world, they said: "Would that we too had what Qārūn has. Indeed, he is very fortunate."

impresses the common man the most. This precisely is the same ploy which the leaders of our society employ every now and then in our cities and villages. The effect of this on people who regard the wealth of this world to be everything was that they cried out that Qārūn was a very lucky person.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيْلَكُمْ ثَوَابُ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنْ اٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ۚ وَلَا يُلَقّٰىهَآ اِلَّا الصّٰبِرُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾[76]

Men of knowledge and wisdom in the nation tried to convince these people that the real thing to which they should devote themselves was not a display of wealth but faith and righteous deeds and their reward. However, not everyone can acquire this wisdom. Only those people receive it who have the strength and perseverance to adhere to faith and righteous deeds instead of losing themselves to the lures of this world.

The expression اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ refers to real knowledge or the knowledge of God's comprehension and of the Hereafter. It is this knowledge from which people obtain real light. If a person does not have this knowledge, then he is in the dark, even if he is competent in other disciplines. Qārun was very adept in the discipline of finance and it is evident that he also claimed to be so. However, he was deprived of real knowledge. For this reason, in spite of being very wealthy, he was just like a snake that greedily guarded his treasures. Precisely, same is the case with other disciplines of knowledge. They too become beneficial for people if they have the radiance of real knowledge with them. If they do not have this knowledge with them, they can become very clever, crafty and cunning, but can never become human beings. Without being a human being, such cleverness and craftiness is very dangerous. It is like a sword in the hands of a naïve person. It may be kept in mind that as far as pure guile and astuteness are concerned, Satan is not second to anyone. In fact, he is the leader of all clever people.

The antecedent of the pronoun in وَلَا يُلَقّٰىهَآ اِلَّا الصّٰبِرُوْنَ is the wisdom and sagacity which these people of knowledge urged them to adopt. It is very common in Arabic for an antecedent to occur in this way, and many examples of this usage can be seen in previous pages of this exegesis. One thing which is evident from this sentence is that real knowledge and patience are pairs. The second thing which is apparent from this is that true wisdom is acquired only by those who have patience. In other words, they are people who have the strength in them to sacrifice the greatest of their assets and riches for the Hereafter. Those who do not have this capacity and strength cannot acquire this wisdom.

A question that arises on this sentence is: is it uttered by the men of learning mentioned in the verse or is it an insertion by God and thereby forms a sentence of

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76. And those who were endowed with knowledge said: "O Wretched Ones! God's reward for those who have faith and do righteous deeds is far better," and this wisdom is given only to the patient.

praise for these men of learning? It is difficult for me to say anything with certainty about this but my mind does go to the second of these options and there are parallel verses of the Qur'ān as well to this effect. In this case, this sentence would mean that this wisdom was given to these people because they were patient. They were not ones who were to be lured by the show and pomp of Qārūn's wealth and majesty.

فَخَسَفْنَا بِهٖ وَبِدَارِهِ الْاَرْضَ ۟ فَمَا كَانَ لَهٗ مِنْ فِئَةٍ يَّنْصُرُوْنَهٗ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۫ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُنْتَصِرِيْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾[77]

Here, a part of Qārūn's account is suppressed. When Moses (sws) saw that after the mischief worked by Samarī, his nation was faced with a new trial, he invited Qārūn and his companions to a *mubāhalah* (cursing and ill-praying) in front of the worship tent so that it becomes evident who is more near and pleasing to God. The Torah has given a lengthy description of this event. I am citing its relevant parts:

> So they moved away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Dathan and Abiram had come out and were standing with their wives, children and little ones at the entrances to their tents. Then Moses said, "This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: If these men die a natural death and suffer the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the realm of the dead, then you will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt." As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, and all those associated with Korah, together with their possessions. They went down alive into the realm of the dead, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community. At their cries, all the Israelites around them fled, shouting, "The earth is going to swallow us too!" (Numbers, 16:27-34)

It is evident from this that Qārūn and his companions were submerged in the earth as a result of the curse and prayer of Moses and this event took place in a manner that neither could Qārūn defend himself, nor was he saved by his people on the strength of whom he wanted to face Moses (sws).

وَاَصْبَحَ الَّذِيْنَ تَمَنَّوْا مَكَانَهٗ بِالْاَمْسِ يَقُوْلُوْنَ وَيْكَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ وَيَقْدِرُ ۚ لَوْلَآ اَنْ مَّنَّ

77. We made him sink in the earth with his dwelling. So, neither did a group could come to his rescue against God nor could he defend his own self.

اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا لَخَسَفَ بِنَا ؕ وَيْكَاَنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۸۲﴾[78]

When people having raw minds see someone affluent or powerful, they are overcome with envy. They think that this power and authority are abiding. However much they may be convinced that these things are temporary and transient, they are not able to grasp this. It is when such people are stripped off their affluence and power do these raw-minded people realise that the advice they had received was true and that God has authority over blessing people with sustenance. He gives sparingly to whomsoever He wants and abundantly also to whomsoever He wants. Similar is what happened to those who became lured by Qārūn's pomp and ostentation. When they witnessed his fate, they cried out that it was a great favour of God that they did not become his companions, otherwise they, too, would have met a similar fate and that those who said that disbelievers never succeed were correct in their contention.

In classical Arabic, the word اَمْسِ does not merely mean "yesterday." It also refers to the recent past. This is very similar to its usage in some other languages. The implication is that those who yesterday were infatuated by Qārūn's splendour said these words.

The word وَيْ in وَيْكَاَنَّ is a word of admonition. Just as we may say: "goodness me" in English, in a similar way the word وَيْ occurs in Arabic. When the word كَاَنَّ or كَاَنَّهٗ is added to it, the meaning will be to the affect: "goodness me, this is the same things as …"

The words لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ after يَقْدِرُ are suppressed on the principle of parallelism. The translation reveals this suppression.

It was referred to earlier that this anecdote of Qārūn was not cited as a past happening. The purpose was to depict in a subtle way the character and fate of Abū Lahab and his companions. The trial with which Moses' (sws) nation was afflicted with in the form of Qārūn was precisely the same as the one Muḥammad's (sws) was afflicted with in the form of Abū Lahab. Though this is not the opportune instance to give details of this similarity, I will allude to some of its aspects so that the real wisdom behind this anecdote is highlighted.

1. Just as Qārūn was the richest person of the Levites, the tribe of Moses (sws), similarly, Abū Lahab was the most affluent person of the Hashimites, the tribe of Muḥammad (sws). There also exists similarity as far as the relation between the two is concerned. Abū Lahab was Muḥammad's (sws) paternal uncle, while Qārūn was the son of Moses' (sws) paternal uncle.

2. Both were very big capitalists. The affluence of Qārūn has already been

78. And those who yesterday desired his position declared: "Indeed! God gives abundantly to those among His servants He wills and sparingly to those He wills. Had God not been gracious to us, He would have thrust us in the earth as well. Undoubtedly, the disbelievers will never succeed."

mentioned earlier. The riches possessed by Abū Lahab will *insha'Allāh* be referred to in Sūrah al-Humazah and Sūrah al-Lahab. Abū Lahab held the keys of the House of God and was the sole custodian of the treasury of the House of God. In this way, he had collected a lot of riches by hook or by crook.

3. Both were very stingy, arrogant and hard-hearted.

4. Both had the same malice for their respective messengers. Qārūn wanted that he have the religious leadership of the tribe so that no one would be able to dent his capitalistic plans. Abū Lahab also wanted that the keys of the House of God and its public treasury remain in his control and no one would deprive him of these.

5. There exists great similarity in the fate of both as well. Both were seized by God's wrath. The fate Qārūn met has been referred to above. The fate of Abū Lahab will *insha'Allāh* be described in Sūrah al-Lahab.

It is evident that here, it is the character of Abū Lahab and his die-hard followers that is actually mentioned in the garb of Qārūn. Unless this aspect of the incidents mentioned in the Qur'ān is kept in mind, their true wisdom cannot be appreciated.

تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُرِيْدُوْنَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا ۭ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ۝۸۳[79]

This verse sums up the whole advice mentioned previously. It is said that the abode of the Hereafter is reserved by the Almighty for those who will not show arrogance in this world and not spread disorder in it. On the contrary, they will be ones who will lead their lives in this world as true servants of the Almighty and will be the advocates of the system of justice and fairness prescribed by God in the society they live in. It is such people who are pious and real success in the Hereafter is for them. The word نَجْعَلُهَا here means "to reserve someone especially for something," and it is evident from the purport of the verse that the real pious are those whose hearts are devoid of arrogance and who do not spread disorder in the land.

مَنْ جَاۗءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهٗ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهَا ۚ وَمَنْ جَاۗءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى الَّذِيْنَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ اِلَّا مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ۝۸۴[80]

Stated in this verse is the principle according to which the Almighty will deal with the righteous and the wrongdoers in the Hereafter. It is stated that those who will come with the provision of virtue with them will be dealt with by the Almighty according to His graciousness: He will reward them much more than they deserve. As for those who have come with bad deeds, the Almighty will deal with them according to His justice. The consequence of whatever they have done will be placed before

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79. We shall reserve this abode of the Hereafter for only those who are not desirous of arrogance and disorder in the land and the ultimate success is for the God-fearing.

80. He who earns a virtuous deed, for him is a better reward than it and he who earns an evil deed, then for such evil doers the recompense is equal to what they did.

them: this is the crop they had sown; now they must taste it.

Section V: Verses (85-88)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. The Prophet (sws) has been assured that he has not asked the Almighty to reveal the Qur'ān to him that he should fret over it. The God Who has revealed it to him will help him in discharging his responsibilities to this Book. God will make him reach his destination successfully. He should not, in the slightest, pay heed to his opponents and should adhere to his propagation. He must not change his stance, however much they might push him. God is with him.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

اِنَّ الَّذِیْ فَرَضَ عَلَیْكَ الْقُرْاٰنَ لَرَآدُّكَ اِلٰی مَعَادٍ ؕ قُلْ رَّبِّیْۤ اَعْلَمُ مَنْ جَآءَ بِالْهُدٰی وَمَنْ هُوَ فِیْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِیْنٍ ﴿۸۵﴾
وَمَا كُنْتَ تَرْجُوْۤا اَنْ یُّلْقٰۤی اِلَیْكَ الْكِتٰبُ اِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ ظَهِیْرًا لِّلْكٰفِرِیْنَ ﴿۸۶﴾ وَلَا یَصُدُّنَّكَ عَنْ
اٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ بَعْدَ اِذْ اُنْزِلَتْ اِلَیْكَ وَادْعُ اِلٰی رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِیْنَ ﴿۸۷﴾ وَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ ۘ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ
اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ كُلُّ شَیْءٍ هَالِكٌ اِلَّا وَجْهَهٗ ؕ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَاِلَیْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾

Indeed, He Who has imposed the responsibility of the Qur'ān on you will definitely make you reach a good fate. Say: "My Lord fully knows who has brought God's guidance and who is in manifest error." (85)

And you never expected a Book to be revealed to you. This is but God's grace and do not become one who helps these disbelievers. And let them not withhold you from God's revelations when they have been sent down to you and call to your Lord and be not among the idolaters and do not invoke any other deity besides God. There is no deity except Him. Everything except His being is mortal. Judgment is in His Hands. And all of you will be returned to Him. (86-88)

Explanation

اِنَّ الَّذِیْ فَرَضَ عَلَیْكَ الْقُرْاٰنَ لَرَآدُّكَ اِلٰی مَعَادٍ ؕ قُلْ رَّبِّیْۤ اَعْلَمُ مَنْ جَآءَ بِالْهُدٰی وَمَنْ هُوَ فِیْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِیْنٍ ﴿۸۵﴾[81]

The word مَعَاد means "culmination, fate and place of return." It occurs as an

81. Indeed, He Who has imposed the responsibility of the Qur'ān on you will definitely make you reach a good fate. Say: "My Lord fully knows who has brought God's guidance and who is in manifest error."

undefined noun in this verse to signify its scale and degree. For this reason, it means a grand fate and a majestic place of return.

After the topics discussed earlier, this verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws): he should not the slightest pay heed to his opponents; He Who has imposed the obligation of this Qur'ān on him will help him out at every step in fulfilling it and will bless him with a grand fate in this world and in the next.

The word لَرَآدُّكَ carries a strong ring of decisiveness and certainty. In other words, the Prophet (sws) will reach this imposing culmination in spite of the chagrin of his opponents. The God Who granted success to all these messengers will grant him success too. The established practice of God about His messengers is unrelenting.

The words قُلْ رَّبِّيْٓ اَعْلَمُ مَنْ جَآءَ بِالْهُدٰى وَمَنْ هُوَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ imply that the Prophet (sws) should stop engaging in debate with his opponents and make this final declaration to them that God knows full well who has brought His guidance and who has strayed in error. In other words, as far as reconciliation is concerned, he has fulfilled his obligation. Now he should consign the matter to God. He will decide who is rightly guided and who has gone astray. The word الْهُدٰى means "God's guidance." This has been explained at an appropriate place in this exegesis. If a person persists in going astray, even after receiving God's guidance, then in fact such a person is openly in error. It is like losing one's way in the light of the day.

وَمَا كُنْتَ تَرْجُوْٓا اَنْ يُّلْقٰٓى اِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبُ اِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ ظَهِيْرًا لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾[82]

This verse further explains what is alluded to above: The Prophet (sws) has not demanded from God to reveal this Book to him, so that after handing over all its responsibility to him God becomes aloof to it. It is actually God's mercy because of which He has sent it down to him without his desire. Thus, he should rest assured that God will guide him at every step in the task He has chosen for him. And since this is a boon and not a bane, it's consequence in the Prophet's favour and those who accept it will be a source of mercy. If some ungrateful people are not giving it due importance, then they are only depriving themselves of God's mercy.

Though the words فَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ ظَهِيْرًا لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ are apparently addressed to the Prophet (sws), yet the admonition and rebuke in them is directed at people who were denying the Qur'ān. The implication is that the Prophet (sws) should faithfully deliver to people whatever he has received from God. It they want to soften him, he does not have any authority to change it. He is answerable to God and not to anyone else. If he slackens his stance for them, he will become their helper and facilitator. By directing these words to the Quraysh, the Almighty has warned the leaders of the Quraysh that if they have even a slight ray of hope in their hearts that they will be able to soften the

82. And you never expected that a Book be revealed to you. This is but God's grace and do not become one who helps these disbelievers.

Prophet (sws), then they should not even think about it materializing.

It is evident from this verse that prophet hood and messenger hood is God's grant. It is only God who bestows it on whomsoever He wants and specially guides and instructs the person he chooses for this mission. This status is granted to a prophet without his desire or expectation and it is only God Who helps him in discharging its responsibilities. These people think that prophet hood is a manifestation of a person's latent abilities. Their view is totally wrong. *Insha'Allāh*, a detailed treatment of this topic will be given in the explanation of the last group's *sūrahs*.

The second thing which is evident from this verse is that, if a person is granted a status without his desire, the Almighty helps him specially in this task. On the other hand, if a person desires a status or position, then God consigns him to it. Narratives explain this aspect in a very effective way. [83]

The third thing which is evident from this verse is that in the case of the Qur'ān, we must not tolerate any softness or compromise. If we do this, we will be regarded as the companions and helpers of wrongdoers.

وَلَا يَصُدُّنَّكَ عَنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ بَعْدَ اِذْ اُنْزِلَتْ اِلَيْكَ وَادْعُ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿۸۷﴾ [84]

This verse explains further in an emphatic way what has just been discussed: however much the opponents may exert force, they should not be able to stop the Prophet (sws) from God's revelations; he must say openly without any fear whatever they have aversion to; the revelations of God that have been revealed to him can be neither turned back nor snubbed; he is now responsible for communicating them; deviating from God's revelation once they have been sent down to him leads to the path of destruction.

The words وَادْعُ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ state that the Prophet (sws) should call people to his Lord and not become among the idolaters. This address, too, is of a similar nature to that which was found in the previous verse. Here, it may be kept in mind that the greatest aversion that the leaders of the Quraysh had was for the call of monotheism. Hence, the verse stresses it the most and at the same time Muslims are warned that if they get over-awed by the opposition of the people and compromise on their stance about monotheism, then they, too, will become idolaters.

وَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ ۘ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۭ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ اِلَّا وَجْهَهٗ ۭ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾ [85]

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83. See, for example: al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-sahīh*, vol. 6, 2443, (no. 6248).

84. And let them not withhold you from God's revelations when they have been sent down to you and call to your Lord and be not among the idolaters and do not invoke any other deity besides God.

85. There is no deity except Him. Everything except His being is mortal. Judgement is in His Hands. And all of you will be returned to Him.

Here, at the end, the belief of monotheism is expressed very emphatically so that any chance of compromise or reconciliation is ended. It is stated that they must not set up any other deity besides God. He alone is to be worshipped and none else. Everything except His Being is mortal. In His hands lies every decision and on the Day of Judgement everyone will return to Him; no one else.

With the grace of God today, Friday, at 10 am I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis. فالحمد لِلّٰہِ علیٰ ذٰلِکَ (so, gratitude of God be on it).

Raḥmānābad
29 March 1974